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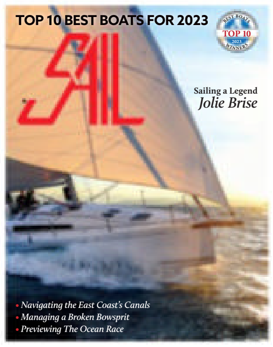
A Beneteau First 36 leaps forward powering off the wind. Read more about this and other winning new designs in SAIL's Top 10 Best Boats of 2023 on page 34. Photo courtesy of Beneteau.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SETTING SAIL

By *Wendy Mitman Clarke*

Keeping the Hands in Hands-On

It was late afternoon just after the U.S. Sailboat Show in Annapolis when I climbed aboard the last boat on the schedule. I and others who review and sail boats for the magazine's Top 10 Best Boats had been on the water all day for several days, putting a gorgeous variety of boats through their paces.

Though it can be fickle, the Chesapeake in autumn had been serving up a series of stunning days for sailing—feisty 15- to 20-knot breezes beneath an alpine blue sky, studded now and then with dusky, post-cold-front clouds. Honestly, it was hard to resist the temptation to just keep going south, like so many of the snowbirds who'd gathered in the anchorage to check out the candy store that is the boat show.

So yeah, maybe I was a little distracted. And perhaps, at this point, a bit tired. But that all vanished once we started sailing.

Unlike the other boats I'd sailed earlier in the day, which had featured a cast of relative thousands (in other words, half a dozen people or so), on this one it was just me, a fellow boat tester, and a guy who worked for the builder. Also, unlike the other boats I'd sailed earlier, this one didn't have a single electric winch. Granted, it was the smallest of the boats we'd sailed this day, but it was just us, lines, elbow grease, and winch handles.

Off we went, zooming like a waterbug. And even though the boats I'd sailed earlier had been exciting, powerful, and beautiful, on this boat I felt something different. On the wind, off the wind, steering, or trimming, it was kind of a relief to be so involved, to grip a winch handle rather than push a button, to feel the tension of a line through my hands and shoulders, to tweak this and adjust that, to have so much *to do*.

It got me pondering a recurring theme I'd heard at the show, about how so many new boats strive to make sailing as easy and as comfortable as possible. This is because, I am told, sailors—especially new sailors—want all the comforts. They expect an easy-going sailing "lifestyle." And as boats and their rigs have gotten steadily bigger to accommodate this desire for ease and comfort, some elements of sailhandling have inevitably changed to make it safely doable for the typical couple or young family. Jibs that tack themselves. Mains that set and reef with barely a need to touch a line.

While on the one hand this effort to make sailing easier in more comfort ostensibly makes it available to more people—to be sure, always a desirable goal—I can't help but feel sometimes that something's getting lost. Don't get me wrong; I'm not some purist who thinks you have to suffer to sail. I like staying warm, dry, safe, and comfy as much as the next person, and I'm sure as hell totally over using a bucket for a head (an admittedly low bar for basic accommodations, but there was a time…). I'll always prefer a reach to a beat, and a run most of all.

But I found it kind of interesting to realize that for me, comfort and fun in sailing also have to do with how I'm interacting with the boat. Maybe it's the former racer in me who never was allowed to cleat a sheet, who lived and died by the telltales. But I realized that as much as I love arriving at a destination, dropping the hook, and firing up the grill for a twilight dinner, how I get there is an equally important element of what I'm doing out there in the first place. And for me, that means keeping the hands in hands-on. SAIL

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SAIL (ISSN 0 036-2700). (USPS # 521-230). Single Issue, January/February 2023, Volume 54, Number 1. SAIL magazine will be published for 8 issues per year. Published monthly in Mar, Apr, May, June, Sep and bi-monthly in Jan/Feb Jul/Aug and Oct/Nov by Active Interest Media, Holdco, Inc.

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The known office of publication is 2143 Grand Ave., Des Moines, IA 50312. Periodicals postage paid at 2143 Grand Ave., Des Moines, IA 50318-9652, and additional mailing offices. Single copy price is $9.99. **SUBSCRIPTIONS:** U.S. and U.S. Possessions $ 19.97 for 8 issues. Canadian orders add $12.00 per year and international orders add $24.00 per year (for surface mail postage). Payment in advance, U.S. funds only. **POSTMASTER:** Please send address changes to: SAIL, P.O. Box 37274, Boone IA 50037-0274. Canada Post Publication Agreement No 40624074. **Editorial Office:** SAIL, 23A Glendale Street, Salem, MA 01970. sailmagazine.com

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Photos

(Clockwise from top)

This was taken while on a TradeWinds cruise in the Grenadines in September. We went ashore at the villas on Mayreau where I got this sunset picture.
– Lee Armstrong,
via sailmail@sailmagazine.com

I took this aboard the schooner Pioneer *on a sunset sail in New York harbor with Lady Liberty keeping watch.*
– Steven Schuyler,
via sailmail@sailmagazine.com

I took this picture from the cockpit of my Beneteau 343, Adagio, *on a mooring at Monhegan, Maine. No special photo filters; I just pushed the red button on my cell phone!*
– Tom Joyce,
via sailmail@sailmagazine.com

Letters

Back Again and Again

I just read "Swan Song in the BVI" in the October/November 2022 issue. Our charter to the BVI in early 2020 was canceled due to COVID. We finally felt safe enough to travel this year (2022). We waited for a boat with the original charter company to no avail (very busy season for them). BVI Yacht Charters has graciously extended our payments for the canceled charter through April 2023. (Thank You!)

We really didn't want to miss out this year, so we contacted the LateSail company, and they arranged a last-minute charter with another company in June. Stranger things happen, but the charter boat is the same boat we chartered previously, only the name was changed. Great BVI trip!

Like Adam Cort, we chartered with the kids when they were young. My wife and I are now in our 60s and we still charter, often by ourselves. We're hooked on the BVI, so this upcoming charter is probably not a "Swan Song" for us!

— Mark Conroy, Cape Cod, MA

A Lifetime of *SAIL*

I lost my father, Alan Armstrong, formerly of Clemson, South Carolina, in early August of last year. He was 90 when he passed. I can remember clearly as a pre-teen when my dad decided to make his dream of owning a sailboat come true. He started with a 22-foot Venture, and when I was in college moved up to a Catalina 27 (if memory serves). My mom was his first mate, of course, but my sister and I would help as best we could while we still lived at home. While there were a few words said in disagreement on occasion, we all had great times on the lake and made many, many wonderful memories. My sister and I were particularly fond of sitting on the bow dousing our feet—and sometimes more—as we bounced on the waves.

I'm not sure when my dad started his *SAIL* subscription, but the fact that he continued it well after my parents finally had to give up boating altogether (the last boat was a pontoon boat) says quite a bit about how much he enjoyed your magazine. It was always on the coffee table, and it was one of the few publications he read regularly. I'm sure it helped him stay connected to the sailing world even if he could no longer physically be a part of it.

So, I'd like to thank you for creating something that he enjoyed so much over the years. Just seeing the logo helps me remember how happy my dad was on the water and how rich in love our family was with him as our captain.

— Jane E. Jones, via sailmail@sailmagazine.com

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UNDER SAIL

JOLIE BRISE
Dauntsey's

Sea and Soul

Photo by Rick Tomlinson, courtesy of Dauntsey's School

Nothing says salty like a big ol' bowsprit, and few vessels can claim more bred-in-the-bone saltiness than the ageless and heroic *Jolie Brise*. Launched in La Havre in 1913 as a workhorse pilot cutter, she was the last boat to carry the Royal Mail under sail. Then she turned around and won the Fastnet Race, rescued 10 crewmen from a flaming schooner mid-ocean in the Bermuda Race, and today continues to win the international Tall Ships Races. For the lucky students at Dauntsey's School in Wiltshire, England, where *Jolie Brise* has been a sail training ship since 1977, she's a teacher of the sea and of the soul, carrying fledgling sailors across the Atlantic, the Bay of Biscay, and even beyond the Arctic Circle. *SAIL* Contributing Editor Tom Cunliffe fell under her spell years ago. Find his story on page 44 for more of this ship's tale.

A Gunkholer's Guide

Decades of northern Great Lakes gunkholing has provided a lesson or three.

(From top) Life is good in an anchorage with nothing but the wind, water, and pines for company; the author at the helm with a Great Lakes freighter in the background.

PHOTOS BY BOB BRINTNALL

BY BOB BRINTNALL

You climb from your berth and start the stove for coffee, warming the cabin. You check your position, looking out the ports as the sun is about to rise. The pristine forest of an uninhabited island is visible out one port, open water out the other. The great lake, Lake Michigan, is glass.

You open the companionway and take your first sip of coffee as the sun breaks the eastern horizon. No other boats, no other people, no houses, no cars. Your only company is a pair of loons taking their morning tour of the harbor. This is why I gunkhole.

One of my more treasured nautical books is a 1982, self-published softcover with hand-drawn graphics titled *A Gunkholer's Guide to Northern Lake Michigan*. Its authors, Patrick and Judy Nerbonne, extol the self-reliance and freedom they discovered gunkholing after growing tired of the marina-cruising lifestyle, sailing from one electrical outlet to the next. This tattered guide was handed down to me when my sailing mentor left the Great Lakes for the Caribbean. Now his ashes bless his favorite gunkhole in these waters, and I try to keep his legacy alive as best I can.

The guide's authors and my mentor were expert gunkholers. I am not. I have an old boat named *Windancer*—a 1976 Catalina 30—with a minimum of old equipment. I seldom spend more than four nights at anchor. Still, for over 20 summers I've anchored in the harbor of one uninhabited island after another, doing my best to live off the grid, untethered to dry land. While I would not call myself an expert, I have been successful at it. Along the way I've also, sometimes painfully, learned a great deal that helps me now gunkhole more effectively than ever.

The words "idiosyncrasy" and "idiot" share the same root, and I'm sure many reading this will raise eyebrows and scoff at my rules for gunkholing. Nonetheless, every "weird" thing I may do comes in the wake of misfortunes and mistakes I have endured and do not wish to endure again. And so I make my own rules. Big shock: Gunkholers tend to be an independent lot.

Rule 1: Two Anchors Down

My mentor always stressed that the best place to store your backup anchor is hooked on the bottom. One of the most gut-wrenching experiences in my two decades of gunkholing was emerging from the woods after an afternoon of exploring to find that a wild wind had come out of nowhere, and my boat was not where I'd left her. She had two anchors down, but one was lost. I'm still not sure how.

Windancer was on the other side of the harbor, half a mile away, bobbing and dragging, but not on the hard, at least not yet. If I'd had only one anchor down, she may have been lost. I was on an uninhabited island; I usually am. Exploring trails less traveled means there's often no one to help when things get tricky. I drop my best anchor first—a large Bruce that my wife, Angela, and I call "Bruce Almighty"—and set it well. Next, I haul my second hook, an oversized Danforth we call "Big Dan," out by dinghy in the direction I most expect the wind to shift to, making a 45-degree angle with Bruce. The wind is always going to shift in the northern Great Lakes. Trying to guess that direction is as much luck as meteorology. It's a bit of work, but I always sleep better knowing both my boys are down there. Naming your anchors is a gunkholer thing.

Rule 2: Boat Bats Off

Another great gut-wrenching experience inspired this second rule, and if I ever have a boat not wired in the '70s, without 40 years of add-ons, disconnects, and suspect grounds, I might change it.

When I was a much younger man, I would occasionally gunkhole singlehanded. Once, I awoke at another uninhabited island to find my batteries were completely dead. Was it the anchor light? A phantom load? Bad batteries? I was never sure.

Whatever the case, I now had to retrieve both my hooks, sail home, and land without any kind of auxiliary help. Empowering? Well, yes, but not something I ever want to have to do again.

Today, once Angela and I are satisfied with how our anchors are set, we turn both battery switches off. We also keep two jumper packs on board—the strongest and newest of which has enough power to start the motor—just in case. The other is for electronics, phones, etc. Battery lanterns provide our cabin lights, and I haul up a battery-powered anchor light with one of the halyards. Extreme, I admit. But if you've ever spent two days on the hook in the middle of nowhere and then turned the key only to hear a click, you might understand why Rule 2 isn't that unreasonable.

Rule 3: Prepped to Flee

An unpredicted storm on a pitch-black night spins the boat and trips your anchors. Dragging toward the rocks, you start the motor, only to find that all that spinning has fouled your prop with one or both of your rodes. You're running out of time. You need to cut those lines and sail. This is when you wish you didn't have your sail cover on, your halyard detached,

The many moods of the northern Great Lakes include peaceful calms and conditions not to be trifled with.

PHOTOS BY ADOBE STOCK

and your genny tied down—so we don't.

Along these same lines, what if the boat caught fire in the middle of the night and you had to abandon ship fast? We also leave our dinghy motor on our dinghy at night and the swim ladder down. Every member of the crew beds down with a flashlight and emergency provisions—just in case, just in case, just in case.

Some Additional Guidelines

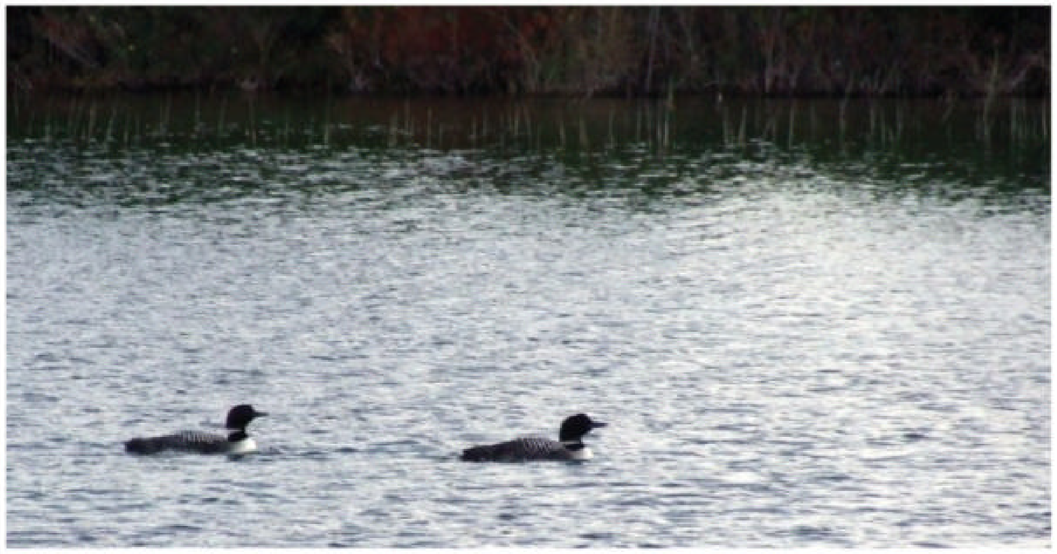
Augmented first aid: Cuts and sprains are one thing, but if you're going to gunkhole, you should have splints, clotting agents, sutures, and burn agents. When you're three horizons from the nearest hospital, you can't just call 911 and 10 minutes later have a paramedic at your door. Not being quite Rambo enough to put in my own stitches, I have used packaging tape to hold an open wound together. The tape was pretty tough getting off, and the method left an impressive scar. But by the time I got real medical attention, it had healed enough to no longer need stitches, so I guess it worked.

Spare parts and tools: Whenever I have to buy something—a hasp, a hinge, turnbuckle, fuel filter, spark plug—I always get an extra to keep with me for next time. A cheap, in-line fuel filter may be readily available at every auto parts store in town, but what a bummer to need one when you're a day's sail away from any dock.

Bug containment plan: We typically gunkhole well above the 45th parallel in northern Lake Michigan. We also sometimes explore Lake Huron's North Channel. There's a voracious fly above the 45th parallel we simply refer to as "bitters." Smaller than a house fly but of similar appearance, these insects will bite hard enough to draw blood, and they sometimes gather in overwhelming swarms. I have enough swatters aboard to leave no one unarmed. The goal is to keep the cabin, at least, a bug-free zone.

Mosquitoes are also pretty thick up north, and while they're like house pets compared to bitters, a few in the cabin when you're trying to sleep can be very annoying.

Along these same lines, just because many harbors in the northern islands are deep enough to anchor close to shore, that doesn't mean that's where you want to be. A breeze from shore is a bug breeze, and the closer you are, the more of them that will be able find you. Finally, a few words on repellents. In my home waters of Grand Traverse Bay, mostly below the 45th parallel, we never concern ourselves much with bug sprays. When I sprayed my children, I also preferred using products that were safer for them and the environment. But when I head north to gunkhole, the gloves are off, and I use things like DEET. Granted, it will melt your water shoes and make you gag. But if you're going to explore and want to come back with any blood left, you're going to need something stronger than kid-safe Off. Note: a dab of repellent on the screens helps keep them away, but make sure whatever you're using doesn't melt the material.


A pair of loons swims by on a placid morning.

The Rough Anchorage

If you gunkhole long enough and often enough, you'll eventually get one. Amid the northern waters of Lake Michigan, winds often follow their own rules, and the open, cool waters make their own weather. Inevitably you'll be in a great spot protected from every direction but one when Mother Nature finds you. The first agonizing question is whether to move, run, or ride it out.

The last one I rode out was the worst in a decade. But there was no better place in the harbor to move to, no better harbor to hide in, and the nearest marina, with a tricky river entrance no less, was hours away. I felt my hooks were good—or at least I had no reason to believe otherwise—and the radar suggested the worst of the storm would miss us. So we rode it out, an experience not for the faint of heart. I had only been in two worse storms in over a decade.

I always get up at least twice a night to check our position, but that night I was up every hour. Even when you "sleep" on nights like that, you don't really sleep. You lay there listening to the wind, the waves hitting the bow, you feel the pitch, analyzing each element. Is it building? Did we drag? Are we swinging? Are we getting closer to shore? Checking your position can also be a challenge. There are no lights on an uninhabited island, and often no other boats at anchor. The GPS track shows a cat's cradle of blue lines. You listen, you check the GPS, you look again, listen again, you check again. It's a bit stressful.

After that night, we weighed anchor just before dawn. Both anchors were still set well; if we'd dragged it had only been a bit. An advantage to setting two anchors at a 45-degree angle is being able to judge drag by whether the angle between them has narrowed. If they ever end up in a straight line, you know the drag is winning.

Angela and I are U.S. Navy veterans. She served as a boatswain mate on a sub tender in the Pacific. I served on an aircraft carrier in the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and the Caribbean. We both have our sea stories, but that stormy night at South Manitou is an experience neither one of us will forget. I'd like to say surviving that rough anchorage left me feeling more self-reliant than ever, invincible even. But the truth is I still felt plenty "vincible" afterward. Nonetheless, two days later we were back at anchor, and life couldn't have been better.

Bottom line: Gunkholing is worth it. AL

PHOTO BY BOB BRINTNALL

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United States v. *The Amistad*

February is Black History Month, and at *SAIL*, we're remembering an important maritime milestone in the fight to abolish slavery with the story of the *Amistad* Revolt.

BY LYDIA MULLAN

Life for enslaved Africans working on early American plantations was bleak, but among the worst atrocities committed during this period was the transatlantic trafficking operation itself. It is difficult to overstate the horrors experienced aboard these ships. By 1814, most nations formally involved in the transatlantic slave trade recognized this and had begun to outlaw international trafficking.

It takes more than treaties to put a halt to an unscrupulous but lucrative operation, however, and traders carried on in secret. The last known slave ship to bring captives to the United States, a schooner called *Clotilda*, was still operational over four decades later. By that time, the British Royal Navy's Squadron had seized approximately 1,600 ships—transporting 150,000 Africans—in violation of the new law.

So, when the Portuguese ship *Tecora* illegally transported Mende captives (native to modern-day Sierra Leone) to Cuba in 1839, it was in good company. The 53 captives were sold in Havana and packed aboard the Spanish two-masted schooner *La Amistad* to be transported to a plantation near Puerto Principe, Cuba.

Conditions were predictably horrible, and the schooner's cook went out of his way to taunt the prisoners, telling them that they would be killed and eaten as livestock. On the third day, a captive named Sengbe Pieh managed to escape his shackles and release other captives as well. They revolted against the Spanish crew

Construction on the re-creation of La Amistad *began in 1998, leading to a turbulent record of ownership before Discovering Amistad became the steward of the ship, maintaining her and educating visitors.*

PHOTO BY CARYN B. DAVIS COURTESY OF DISCOVERING AMISTAD

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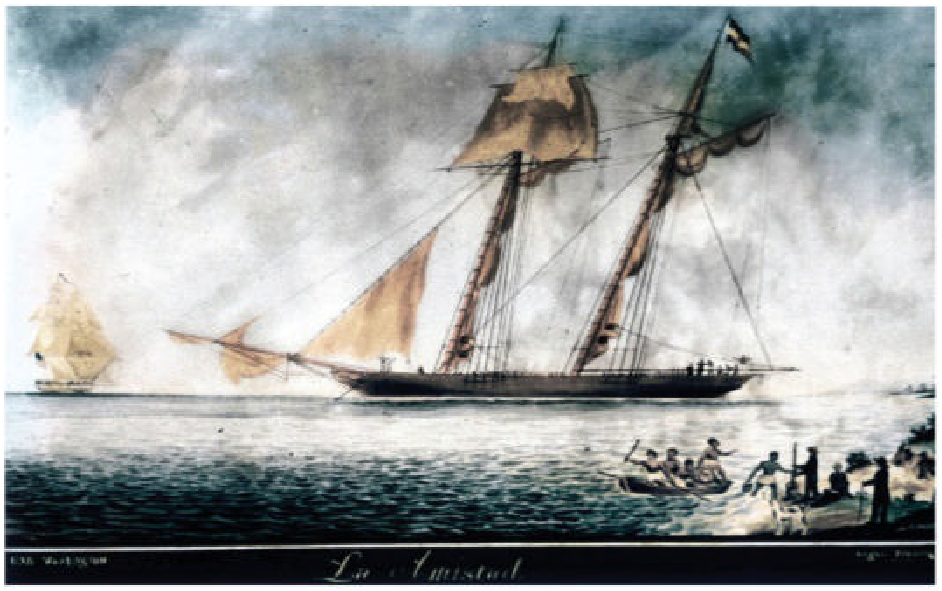

La Amistad *is depicted in New London with her interceptor to the left as the Mende make their way to shore.*

PUBLIC DOMAIN ILLUSTRATION VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

and took control of *La Amistad*.

Three Mende men and two of the crew were killed in the struggle, and others escaped in a lifeboat. Pieh commanded the remaining crew to sail the ship back across the Atlantic and return the Mende to Sierra Leone. However, unbeknownst to Pieh, the Spaniards set a course that took them northwards. They assumed that once they entered American waters, they would be intercepted and assisted.

It took until Long Island, New York, to be seized, but ultimately the ship was spotted and towed to New London, Connecticut. Pieh and the other 42 remaining captives were incarcerated in Connecticut on charges of murder and piracy. None of the Mende spoke English, which made it difficult to explain their abduction until an interpreter could be found.

Two lawsuits ensued, one by the crew of the ship that had intercepted *La Amistad* claiming it as their property, and the other against the Spanish for trafficking the Mende. Due to the involvement of abolitionists and human rights groups, jurisdiction issues, and the numerous parties claiming ownership, the case received widespread attention.

In fact, The United States v. *The Amistad* (1841) went all the way to the Supreme Court of the United States, becoming one of the most influential rulings on slavery in the pre-Dred Scott era. The court ultimately decided in favor of the Mende, stating that as free citizens (due to the illegal nature of their capture and transport) they were entitled to take whatever legal measures necessary to secure their freedom, including the use of force. After a multiple-year-long ordeal, they were free, giving hope and motivation to the American movement to abolish slavery.

Today, the story of the *Amistad* Revolt is taught by Discovering Amistad, an organization dedicated to the upkeep of a modernized reconstruction of *La Amistad*, built in Mystic, Connecticut. Its programs have reached more than 16,000 visitors, teaching about slavery and the people who have fought for a more equitable America, past and present. It also hosts an annual Juneteenth festival in partnership with Mystic Seaport Museum to reflect on and celebrate African culture in America. For more on the work of Discovering Amistad, visit discoveringamistad.org.

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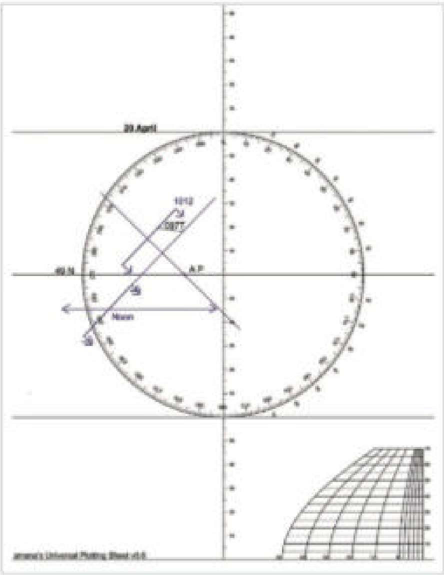
CRUISING TIPS

with Tom Cunliffe

Ready—or Not?

It's easy to imagine that all neat berthing maneuvers result from smart boathandling. It's a sorry business if the person at the blunt end stuffs the bow into the woodwork at 3 knots. However, even if the skipper slides her in like a pro, it doesn't end there. What about the deck gang, especially if there's only one of them? Entering a strange harbor, it's often impossible to predict which side will be to the dock, what fenders will be needed, or which ropes will be asked for first. My wife has this down to a T. We carry five biggish fenders, which should be plenty. She rigs two on each side and keeps the third ready to deploy once she can see what's coming. Three in the right place is usually enough. A stern line is secured on each quarter and led to the point amidships from which she'll hop ashore. Same goes for the bow lines. Springs are coiled ready on deck. In the event we ever do less than this and our luck runs out, we inevitably end up with a last-minute scramble that may or may not end well.

Plotting Sheets



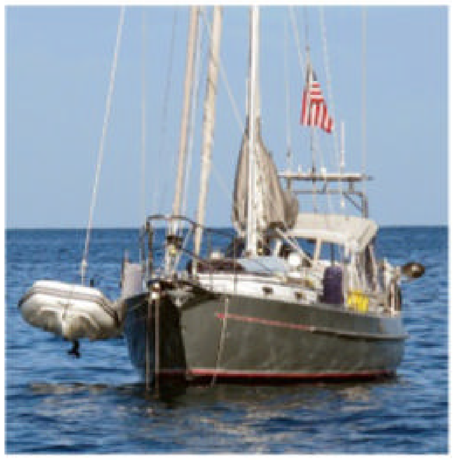
Whether you're studying for an Ocean Navigator certificate or just interested in celestial navigation, you'll be needing plotting sheets. The scale of oceanic paper charts against the width of a pencil point precludes accurate plotting on them, so blank charts that can plot sights anywhere the world over are used instead. A fix plotted on one of these blanks can then be transferred to the paper or electronic passage chart to monitor the day's progress. Plotting sheets such as those issued by Weems & Plath have traditionally come in pads or packs. Their large size makes for clear plotting, and they remain the best available option. However, money must, of course, change hands. If you run out, are broke, or are otherwise disinclined to part with the hard-won dollar, printable A4-sized PDFs can be downloaded from starpath.com/downloads/UPS.pdf at the popular price.

Save LPG

If you like to cook on board, the undersized apologies for LPG bottles supplied as standard with many modern yachts don't get you very far. Even if you don't serve up four-course dinners every night, the one thing we all do is make coffee or tea. Years ago, I realized that if I counted the number of strokes on my galley foot pump for a mugful, then tipped the right amount into the kettle, I'd use enough gas to boil it and no more, leaving no excess water to sit there going cold while I sipped from the cup. A pressurized system doesn't easily measure, so it wastes water and LPG. A foot or a hand pump is simple to install. I keep a Whale charcoal in-line filter on mine (cheap from RV outfits) and use it only for drinking water. No matter where I have filled my tanks, I don't waste LPG, and I always get a decent mug of tea.

A Clean Bottom and No Burglars

Nighttime dinghy theft is a major issue in the Caribbean. Even in parts of the United States it is growing in popularity as outboard values surge and mini-RIBs are ever-more tempting to the marauding pirates. Davits are one solution, but for those of us who don't have them, an attractive answer is to hoist the small boat to deck level in the evening. It will have a hoisting strop anyway for bringing it aboard to go to sea, so hook this to the main halyard, wind it up to the guardrails, and make up the bow and stern painters to stop it bouncing around in any kind of wash or swell. A minute is all it takes to sleep easy. There's also the added value of a bottom and prop that stay clean all year round. *AL*



(From top)

Don't skimp on the fenders when docking.

Knowing how much water you'll need in advance saves on both fuel and water.

A forenoon sight on a downloaded plotting sheet.

Hoisting the dinghy on the hip overnight pays off.

PHOTOS BY TOM CUNLIFFE

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AT THE HELM

with Andy Schell

A Certain Uncertainty

Planning for uncertainty is a difficult but critically important seamanship strategy.

September 16 was supposed to be the closing date on the sale of *Icebear*, our Swan 59. We'd had a contract in place since May with the buyer, a nonprofit that was set to purchase the boat along with the $40,000 entry fee in the retro round-the-world Ocean Globe Race (OGR), which we'd signed up for. Two weeks earlier I'd gotten wind that the deal might not close—raising money for a round-the-world race campaign is no easy feat—but until the 11th hour I thought there was a chance it would happen. It didn't.

I was in the U.K. then, and *Icebear* was in a marina only a few hundred yards from the shed where our new flagship Farr 65, *Falken*, is being refit. The sale of *Icebear* was to be symbolic and practical—a move from one era of 59 North to the next, and a way to help fund the increasingly expensive refit on the new boat. Instead, we were caught off guard and left with a major funding gap on *Falken* and a 59-foot boat that we now had to figure out what to do with.

In the big picture, living with uncertainty and learning how to mitigate against it is really the essence of good seamanship. The *Icebear* non-sale is a lesson in acknowledging the uncertain and a reminder to always be prepared for it.

Yet, uncertainty is weirdly counter to the notion of anticipation that I preach when it comes to offshore sailing. Anticipating the weather is probably the single most important aspect of sailing offshore; if you're always ready for what's to come over a 24-hour time window, then rarely will the unexpected happen. With anticipation as a foundational planning tool, you'll be more likely to reef early, more likely to lash things down ahead of a forecast blow, more likely to be ready for a whole host of things over the horizon.

Uncertainty derails that anticipation. After all, there's only so much planning and prep you can do to anticipate the future, which by nature is, of course, unpredictable.

The lesson is to plan for the uncertain. Think about the what-ifs. What if the forecast isn't accurate? What if someone gets injured? What if, despite our preparation, we have a gear or systems failure? What if we miss a deadline or a weather window and are up against a time constraint?

In my confidence at always being prepared for a certain future, I fell prey to the reality of a decidedly uncertain future in the *Icebear* deal. I had planned and anticipated. We had a written contract in place since May. I had long email chains with the buyers about managing the OGR campaign and helping them spec a new mast and rigging ahead of the race. We had made marina reservations in the U.K. and blocked off calendar dates with the riggers. We had *everything* covered.

Icebear was set to sail her last passage from Sweden to the U.K. with our first-ever all-women's crew, led by skipper Nikki Henderson and mates Emma Garscha-

Icebear roars *off the wind under spinnaker.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF ANDY SCHELL

Icebear and crew head south in the Bay of Biscay en route to Portugal, after a deal to sell her fell through suddenly.

PHOTO BY ANDY SCHELL

gen and my wife, Mia Karlsson. I had flights booked to meet them on arrival in the U.K., and four days later the deal was set to close.

Except I had forgotten that the future isn't guaranteed. I didn't plan for the uncertainty and broke a cardinal rule of seamanship—not having a backup plan.

We scrambled. I put together a skeleton crew for the delivery south. We'd leave the U.K. while the forecast was stable and sprint across Biscay and south to Portugal where we'd have options. We'd obviously continue to list the boat for sale, but we could also keep sailing her ourselves if we wanted to. Once south of Biscay the season extends considerably, and we'd be able to set off across the Atlantic any time. But once the U.K. fall sets in, it's very difficult to escape it unscathed. Less than 48 hours after this new plan came together, we set sail from Gosport and headed south.

My friend and business partner, Nikki Henderson, likes to say that at sea, risk is "inversely proportional to flexibility"—meaning the more inflexible your plan becomes, the higher the risk you run in executing that plan.

Good seamanship requires that you learn how to anticipate the future and remove the uncertainty. Great seamanship requires you to admit that a certain future is impossible and to remain flexible. AL

Postscript: *Icebear* did sell in the end, very quickly. While we were at sea en route to Lisbon, a friend of a friend reached out and made us a lowball offer on the boat. With *Falken* in need of our full focus, we took it, and *Icebear*, as of September 26, is now in the hands of her new owner.

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Three of the IMOCA 60s bound for The Ocean Race got a preview of the competition during Le Defi Azimut. 11th Hour Racing Team member Francesca Clapcich is back for another round of The Ocean Race (right).

THE OCEAN RACE
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HIRUMET
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PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE OCEAN RACE: VINCENT CURUTCHET / IMOCA; AMORY ROSS/11TH HOUR RACING (RIGHT)

Off to the Races

The Ocean Race is back this season after a major update. Here's what to watch for.

BY LYDIA MULLAN

It's been a long five years since the conclusion of the 2018 Volvo Ocean Race, and a lot more than the event's name has changed. Here's everything you need to know about this season's premier ocean race before it kicks off on January 8.

The Route

Throughout every iteration of this event since 1973, The Ocean Race's route has followed the same basic parameters: a circuit of the globe starting and finishing in Europe with stopovers scattered throughout. However, the route itself changes for every edition, and the stopover ports vary. This year, Alicante, Spain; Cabo Verde; Cape Town, South Africa; Itajaí, Brazil; Newport, Rhode Island; Aarhus, Denmark; The Hague, Netherlands; and Genova, Italy, are scheduled to host, and a "fly-by" in Kiel, Germany, creates an additional opportunity for fans to see the boats in race-mode while underway.

A discerning eye will note that this route is somewhat of a deviation from the typical Volvo Ocean Race routes of the past decade, which incorporated the Indian Ocean via stopovers in the Middle East, India, and Asia. It's not clear whether this decision stems from a lack of willing host cities in the region, or the race organizer's reluctance to put sailors back in waters that proved problematic in recent editions—including a fatal nighttime collision with a fishing vessel, the marooning of one team on a reef, and one memorable leg cancellation during which the boats had to be shipped from one port to the next due to piracy concerns. Instead, the teams will face off against a monstrous Southern Ocean leg, bypassing Oceania and stretching three-quarters of the way around the globe, south of the five Great Capes and through some of the planet's most treacherous waters.

THE OCEAN RACE

MEET THE TEAMS

The race's main fleet will consist of five IMOCA 60 teams hailing from the United States, France, and Germany. Keep an eye out for upcoming announcements on the VO65 fleet, which had yet to confirm its roster at press time in early December. Per early reports, we may see teams from Mexico, the Baltic states, Poland, Austria, Portugal, and France on the start line.

11
11TH HOUR RACING
11TH HOUR RACING
#OCEANHOUR

11TH HOUR RACING TEAM

American

Can sustainability and performance go hand in hand?

Built on the DNA of the Vestas-11th Hour campaign from 2017-18, America's home team, 11th Hour Racing Team, has put sustainability at the top of its priority list. While building a brand-new IMOCA 60 for the race, they compiled an extensive build report to help future projects reduce environmental impact. The boat will be skippered by Charlie Enright, while his long-time co-skipper, Mark Towill, will move into an off-boat role as Team CEO. The pair has been competing together since meeting during the 2007 Transpac when Towill was just 18 years old.

COYOTE
HIRUMET
GUYOT

GUYOT ENVIRONMENT-TEAM EUROPE

French-German

Will history repeat for a pedigreed boat?

Co-skippered by the French ocean racer Benjamin Dutreux and German Olympian Robert Stanjek, this team is built upon a winning combination from the 2021 inaugural edition of The Ocean Race Europe. Their boat, formerly owned by 11th Hour Racing Team as *Alaka'i*, has an impressive pedigree, most notably earning a second place in the 2016-17 Vendée Globe under the name *Hugo Boss 6* while skippered by Alex Thomson. At the start of The Ocean Race, Dutreux will be fresh off an eighth-place finish in the singlehanded transatlantic Route du Rhum, suggesting great things in store for the team and boat.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE OCEAN RACE: AMORY ROSS/11TH HOUR RACING; ILP VISION-CHARLES DRAPEAU/GUYOT ENVIRONNEMENT-TEAM EUROPE

BIOTHERM RACING
French

Will breadth of experience prove a winning recipe?

Another new boat on the starting line, *Biotherm Racing* will be skippered by Paul Mielhat. Mielhat is a regular name on the solo ocean racing circuit, and the multinational crew of eight seems to have experience in everything—the America's Cup, Class40s, Olympics, the Vendée Globe, The Ocean Race Europe—but they only have one Ocean Race among the whole team.

HOLCIM-PRB
French

Can Escoffier defend his spot on the podium?

Though made a household name after a dramatic rescue in the 2020 Vendée Globe, *Holcim-PRB* skipper Kevin Escoffier has earned his stripes as the only skipper in the fleet who's already brought home the gold in this race. He was part of the crew of the past two Dongfeng Race Team campaigns, which earned first- and third-place finishes. This team was a late addition to the race, only confirming their campaign in July. Despite limited time to prepare, Escoffier made time to squeeze the Route du Rhum onto the calendar this autumn. His fourth-place finish will certainly have the other teams watching this boat closely.

TEAM MALIZIA-SEAEXPLORER
German

Will having a team give a performance boost to this solo skipper?

This boat was launched just six months ago, with skipper Boris Herrmann using the Route du Rhum as its shakedown sail. Herrmann finished 24 of 38 boats, well behind other skippers that will be on The Ocean Race start line come January. However, given that the boat had little time to be broken in before the Route du Rhum, and that solo racing and crewed racing are two very different animals, it doesn't follow that Team Malizia-Seaexplorer will be outclassed by the competition. Herrmann's ambitions are to finish The Ocean Race, drop the crew off, and lap the globe a second time in the 2024-25 Vendée Globe.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE OCEAN RACE: RONAN GLADU/BIOTHERM RACING (TOP); ELOI STICHELBAUT/POLARYSE

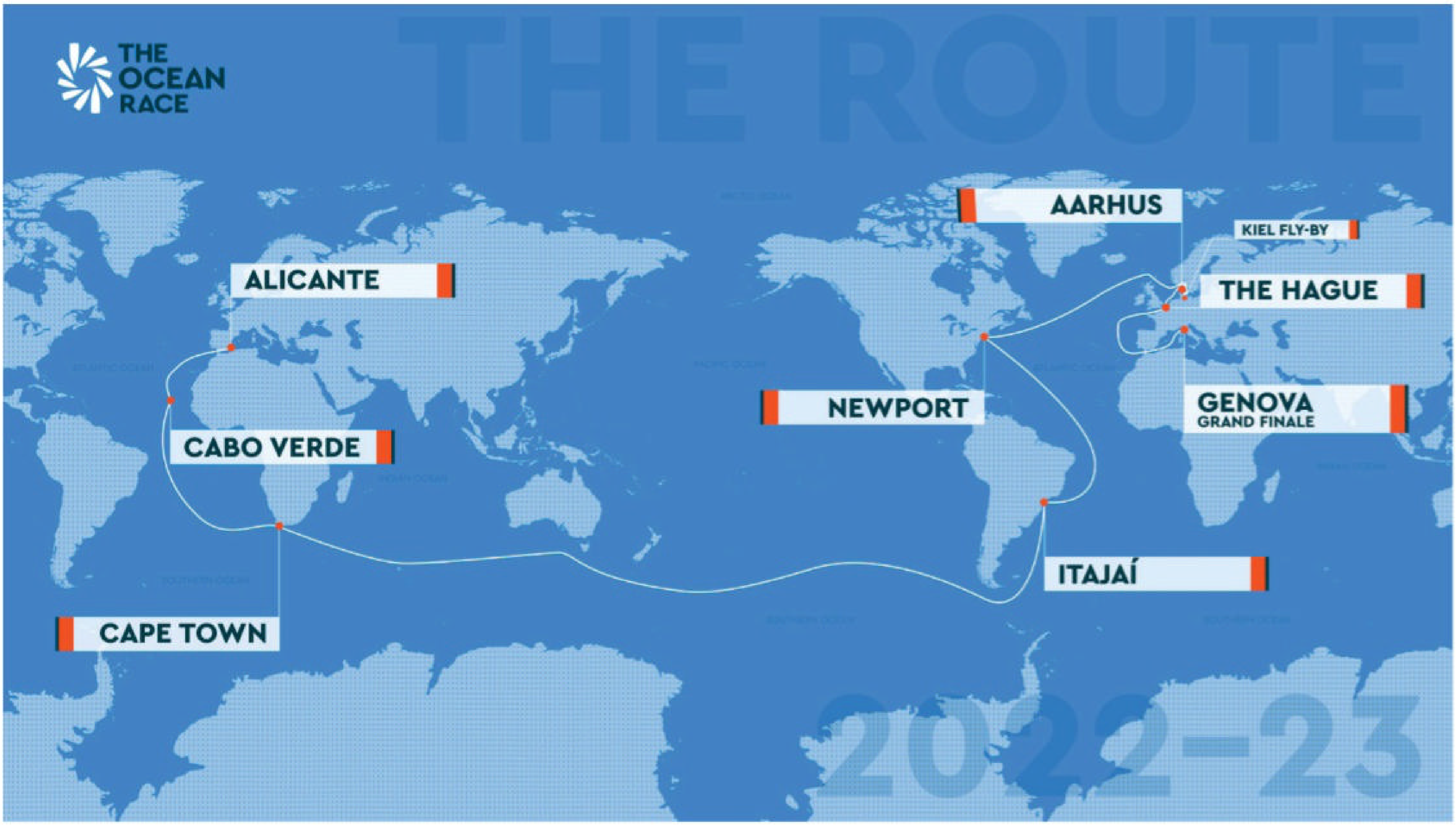

ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF THE OCEAN RACE

The Boats

The Ocean Race's primary class is now the IMOCA 60, a box-rule class that's been in production since the early '90s, primarily used for elite shorthanded ocean racing such as in the Vendée Globe. According to 11th Hour Racing Team CEO Mark Towill, this means that sailors will have to be more in tune with their boats than ever. "When all the boats were identical, you pushed the boat as hard as you could. But with different designs in the race, you need to be more aware of your own boat's limitations and strengths," he says.

This approach has pros and cons—on one hand, winning a race in the design office doesn't make for exciting spectating; on the other, different strengths call for more strategic racing—not to mention the introduction of technological innovations like foils. The IMOCA 60s will sail with five crew on board, including one on-board reporter and at least one female crew member. Since the 2018 edition, the race has mandated that every team include female sailors.

For the past few editions, the Volvo Ocean Race has been sailed in VO65s, a one-design class with a race-operated boatyard maintaining all the hulls, hardware, and sails to identical standards. Though VO65s will still race in the 2023 edition, they will be used as a training class, with all boats required to have at least three of their 10 crew members (plus an on-board reporter) be under 30 years old. The VO65 teams will also have at least three women as part of their crew and be allowed one additional crew member for the Southern Ocean leg.

Another interesting addition for this fleet is the VO65 Sprint Cup, which will add VO65 teams not competing in the full round-the-world race to some of the shorter legs and in-port series. Presumably this has been done to provide more opportunities for underfunded teams and rookie sailors to get experience. But given how exhausted Volvo Ocean Race sailors typically are when they arrive at stopovers, it's hard to say whether experienced teams will have the upper hand on these green short-course teams or not.

Racing with Purpose

One core theme for the race this year is a focus on sustainability. While building 60-foot fiberglass boats for grand prix racing seems somewhat at odds with this mission, race organizers have committed to some impressive targets. Just to name a few initiatives, this includes being a "climate positive" race—recouping more than the total of its greenhouse gas emissions with climate capture projects—and presenting 12 Ocean Summits to drive policy change. These summits, which began in 2019, have brought participants together to discuss issues facing the ocean, such as lack of governance and protection, and draft best practices and clear action items. The collected work will be presented in conjunction with the United Nations General Assembly in September of this year.

Another branch of the sustainability strategy is Relay4Nature, a partnership with the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean, Peter Thomson, to call on world leaders to increase their commitments to protect and restore the ocean.

Race organizers recognize that the ocean is their arena, and sailors have a stake in protecting it for generations to come. It's no surprise that multiple competitors are racing with sustainability and climate action at the forefront of their campaigns.

Visit theoceanrace.com for more on the extensive sustainability program backing this race.

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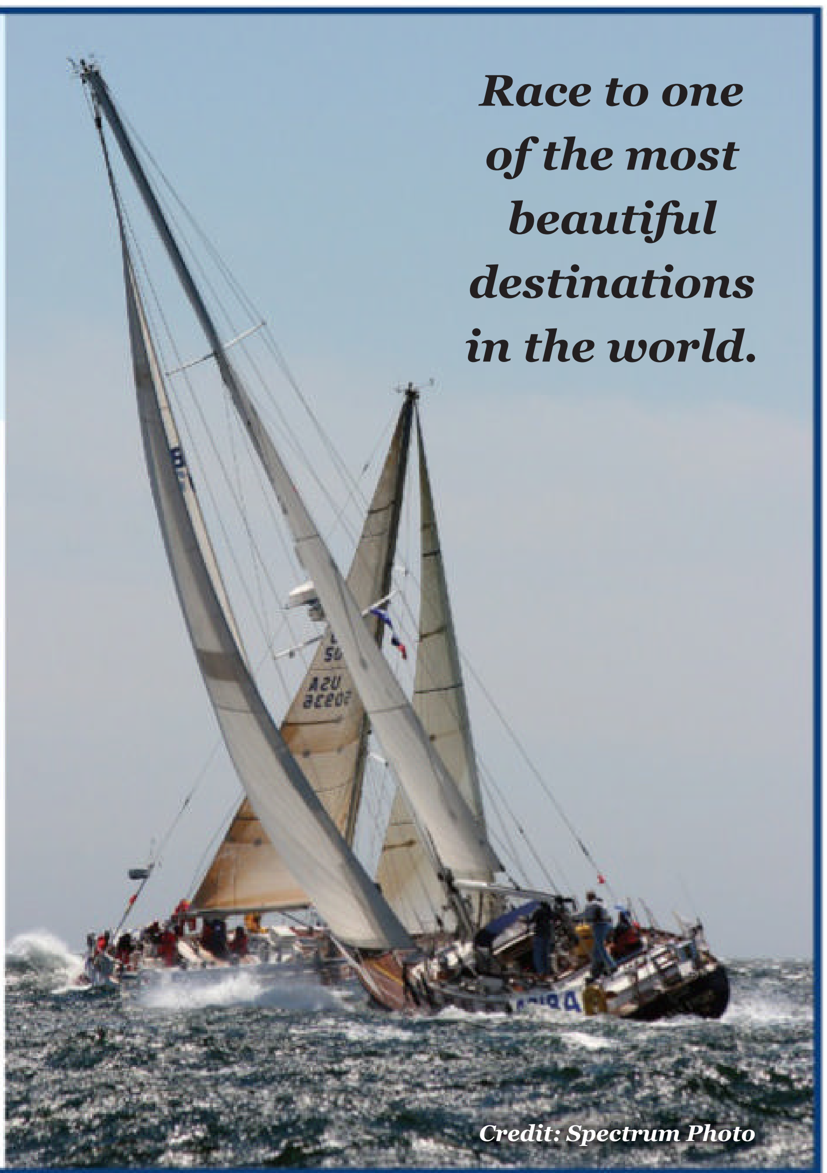

Race to one of the most beautiful destinations in the world.

Credit: Spectrum Photo

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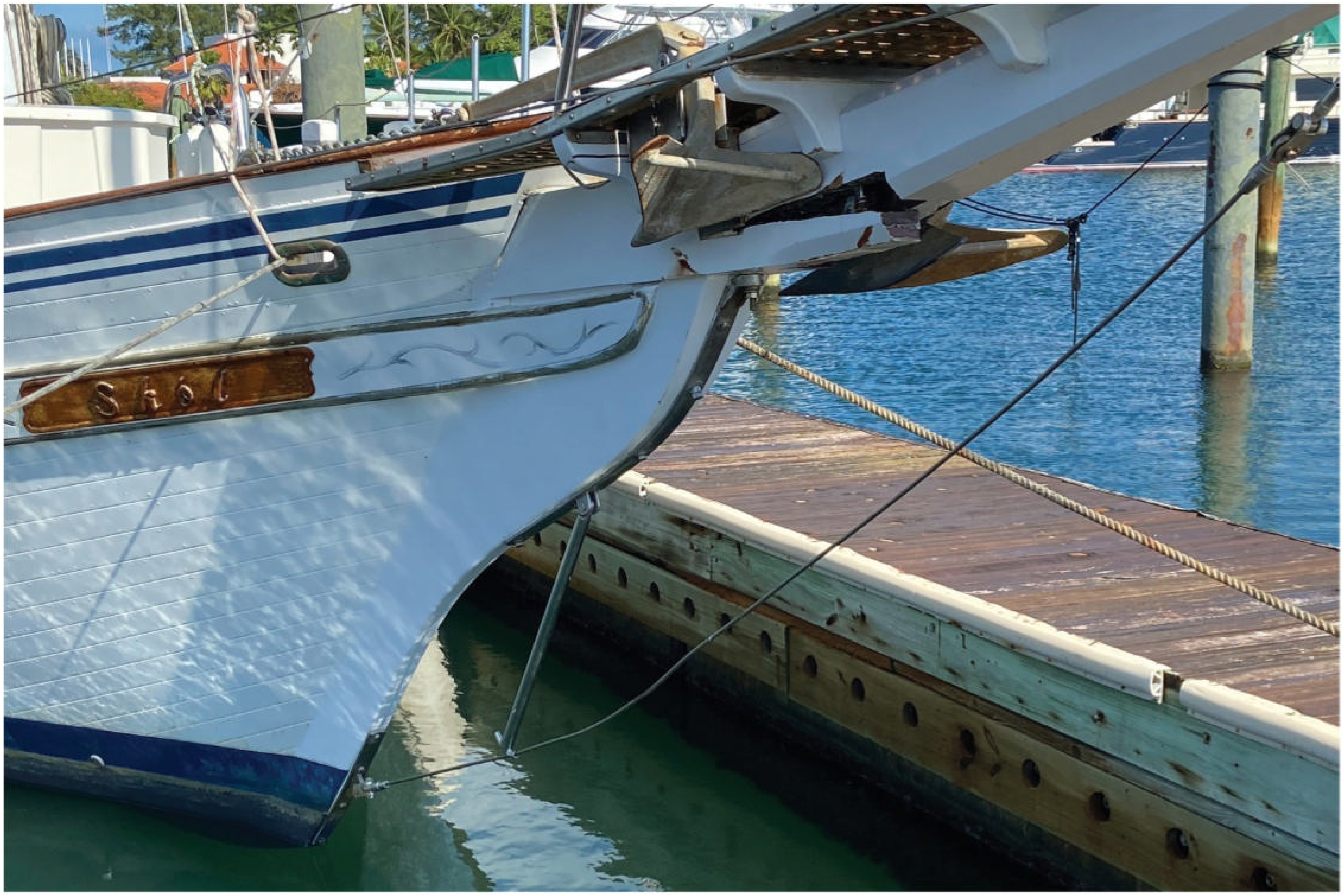


PHOTO BY PETER NIELSEN

Breaking Bad

Plenty had already broken. Then the bowsprit went, threatening the whole rig.

BY PETER NIELSEN

Is any command less welcome on a boat than "all hands on deck!"? And short of "man overboard!" is any cry more guaranteed to wake you instantly from the deepest of slumbers? It came, as such things do, in the wee hours of the darkest of nights.

"The bowsprit's broken," the skipper, Casey, said tersely as I blinked myself awake. "Get your gear on and meet me on the foredeck."

Topside, white-tipped waves reared out of the murk and gleamed briefly in the spreader lights as they raced under the 52-foot ketch. The wind had not abated since I'd gone to my bunk—still blowing a solid 20 knots, still from the north right out of our destination, still whipping up 6- to 8-foot seas against the Yucatan current.

Alongside the cockpit, the boat's twin backstays whipped loosely in the wind as the masthead wagged back and forth. As I slowly made my way forward on the pitching deck, the lifelines alternately went slack and snapped taut each time the 8-foot bowsprit dug into a wave and lurched upwards, then slapped down again as the bow lifted clear of the water, unpredictable as a fractured limb.

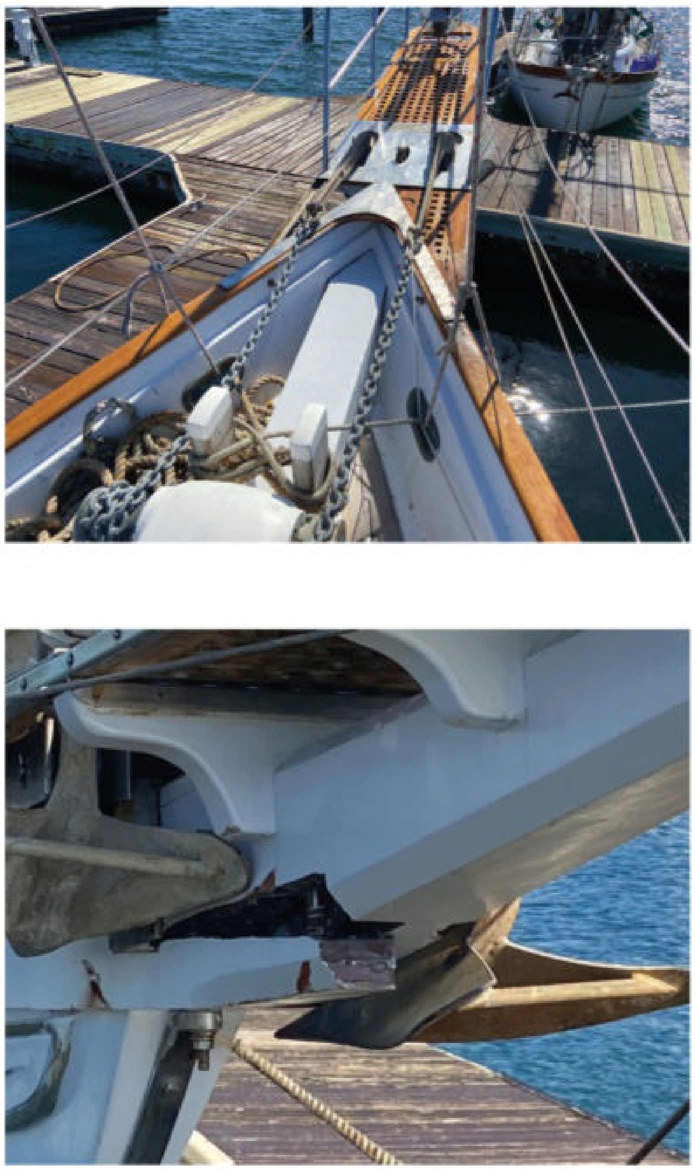
Each time the bowsprit lifted, the forestay with its furled genoa sagged way off to leeward and then jerked tight again. The sprit appeared to have gained a hinge just forward of where it met the stemhead, and it was obvious that the only thing preventing it from detaching completely was the bobstay wire that ran from the tip of the sprit to a fitting on the stem, just above the waterline. How long would it be before one or the other broke?

I took all this in as Casey, prone on the deck, inched forward with a rope lashed to the detachable cutter stay. I winced each time the bow plunged into a wave, envisioning the sprit breaking completely and flying back toward us, complete with its pair of 60-pound anchors, immediately followed by the mast snapping at the lowers and probably bringing the mizzen down on our heads as well. It was an altogether too plausible scenario, and I tried not to dwell on it.

Casey passed the rope through one of the enclosed fairleads and back to Joey, our third hand, who handed it back to me. I took its tail around a mast winch and wound it in tight. The bowsprit still lifted and fell, but the cutter stay was taut, and at least we had done something. More was needed, though.

Before long I had identified and freed a spare genoa halyard, as well as the staysail halyard, and these were taken forward and lashed through the bow fairleads, then cranked in hard on the mast winches. Then we took the running backstays aft and tensioned them as best we could. Now, at least, the mast might stay up should the bobstay break.

This entire procedure seemed to take only minutes, but looking at my watch, I was surprised to see we had been at it for well over an hour. Time flies when you're moving around on your hands and knees.



Clockwise from left: The damaged sprit; halyards through bow fairleads supported the rig; the broken bowsprit.

Back in the cockpit, we caught our breaths and looked at each other. This was far from the first incident we had dealt with in the preceding three days. Three of us—me, Joey, and his wife, Micaiah—had signed on to help Casey deliver the ketch from Guatemala's Rio Dulce to Galveston, Texas. We were barely 300 miles into the 1,100-mile passage, and even before this latest mishap we had all decided to jump ship in Isla Mujeres, Mexico. It had become painfully obvious that the boat was too unsafe to take across the Gulf of Mexico. Never mind Texas; now our attention was focused merely on getting safely to the nearest port.

The Bill Garden-designed Mikelson 52 had languished on the Rio Dulce for many years, its solid, Taiwanese-built hull possessing a fine pedigree but concealing a raft of aging systems. We had already encountered the fallout from many of them. She was a complicated boat, with the usual snake's wedding of hoses, tubes, cables, and wires under the cabin soles, with no schematics or labelling to show what anything was or what it was supposed to do. First the hydraulic steering played up, then the bilges overflowed and all the pumps stopped working, then there were fuel problems, then the boom-furling mainsail blew out of its sun-perished track during a squall. Poor Joey seemed to spend most of the passage head-down in the bilges, trying to keep up with the latest failures.

The only functioning electronics on board were an elderly Raymarine plotter and a depth sounder, not counting a fixed VHF that proved to only work at short range. Fortunately, I had brought my Navionics-equipped iPad, a PLB, and a Garmin inReach satellite messenger that could get weather forecasts offshore, not to mention alert friends and family if we ran into trouble. Equally fortunately, Joey had brought his handheld VHF.

Now, with the voyage effectively over, we only had to make it 90 miles to Isla Mujeres where we could leave the boat for repairs. Turning back was out of the question, for we knew we were low on fuel. The big diesel had been gulping it down while keeping our speed up against the steep seas, and Joey warned us that the main tanks were perilously low. The only option was to keep going north to the island of Cozumel, where we could anchor and wait for the promised southeasterly wind to knock down the seas.

We had 20 gallons in jerrycans on deck, and we decanted a couple of them into the tanks as we continued motoring toward Cozumel, trying to keep the speed down enough to stop the bows from digging too deeply into the head seas. It was going to be a long night.

The overriding question was would the rig stay up, especially in the current conditions? My trepidation was not eased when I heard Casey discussing what we should do "when" the rig came down, not "if" the rig came down. We should knock the pins out of the turnbuckles to free the rigging, apparently.

Fair enough, established practice, but with what? There was a pathetic shortage of tools on board, and certainly no sign of either a hacksaw, a small club hammer, or a center punch, all of which would be useful for freeing rigging. Perhaps it was a good thing that most of the turnbuckles were either lacking cotter pins or secured with ones that were so small as to be useless. No, if the rig came down in that sea state, there would be an unholy mess and no quick way out of it before the mast punched a hole in the hull. Plus, with the mainmast connected to the mizzenmast by a triatic stay, and the mizzen rigging surrounding the cockpit, it was likely that someone would be badly hurt or worse.

Not far away were the bright lights of an almost-stationary cruise ship, waiting until dawn before docking in Cozumel. I suggested we make a pan-pan call, just to alert nearby vessels of our situation. Casey reluctantly agreed and spent the next few minutes making the call. There was no response. It wasn't until we tried Joey's handheld that we got a reply from the nearby cruise ship. By then Casey had gone down for a nap, and I talked to the deck officer on the MSC *Divina*. I gave him the name of the boat and the number of persons on board and told him we had a damaged rig and were low on fuel but that we were not in need of immediate assistance.

The officer—I regret not getting his name—called back 15 minutes later. He told us he had contacted the Mexican navy station in Cozumel, which was sending out a small patrol boat to escort us

PHOTOS BY PETER NIELSEN

The Mikelson 52 at anchor (left) before leaving the Rio Dulce, bowsprit intact. The crew diverted to Isla Mujeres (below).

in. The *Divina* would stand by until the coast guard arrived, then steam ahead to dock in Cozumel. Casey, when he emerged, was not happy with this news.

"We don't need an escort," he groused. To which our answer was that although we might not need one at this moment, we would most certainly be glad of it should the rig come down or the engine quit, which it had done several times already. The liferaft was several years past its service date, and the dinghy lay partly deflated on deck—its pump lacked the vital adapter—so our abandon-ship options were rather limited.

The Defender-class SAR boat—the same as those used by the U.S. Coast Guard—approached in the predawn, and the *Divina* powered up and headed into Cozumel. As we motored up the island's west coast, shadowed by the navy, we debated our next steps. The wind had abated a little, but with a north-setting current running at 3-4 knots there was a healthy chop. Casey, reluctant to enter a marina with an engine that could quit at any time, wanted to anchor; Joey and I, wary of further compromising the bowsprit and well aware that the windlass itself was loose in its mounts, were pushing for a marina or a dock.

The standoff was resolved when the navy shepherded us to an unused commercial mooring, which we gratefully picked up. Our new friends circled us to make sure we were safe, then the captain came aboard to go through some paperwork for their report. They were friendly and professional throughout, and we were glad of their assistance.

We stayed on the mooring that night and left next morning for Isla Mujeres, 50 miles away, with the wind back in the east and a much more benign sea state. It was almost funny when the engine died about an hour out of Cozumel—sure enough, we had run out of fuel. Joey and I poured in the last two-and-a-half jerrycans, and we were soon under way again, running slow to conserve fuel. True to form, we got to Isla Mujeres after dark, so we had to anchor outside. Fortunately, it was a calm night.

At the dock next morning, Joey and I finally got a close look at the bowsprit. It had broken along the lines of a recent repair, and there was rot at its core. The dolphin striker, which had not been clamped to the wire bobstay and relied solely on tension to keep it in place, had worked enough as the rig moved to eventually lose its grip entirely, allowing the sprit to move upward and break.

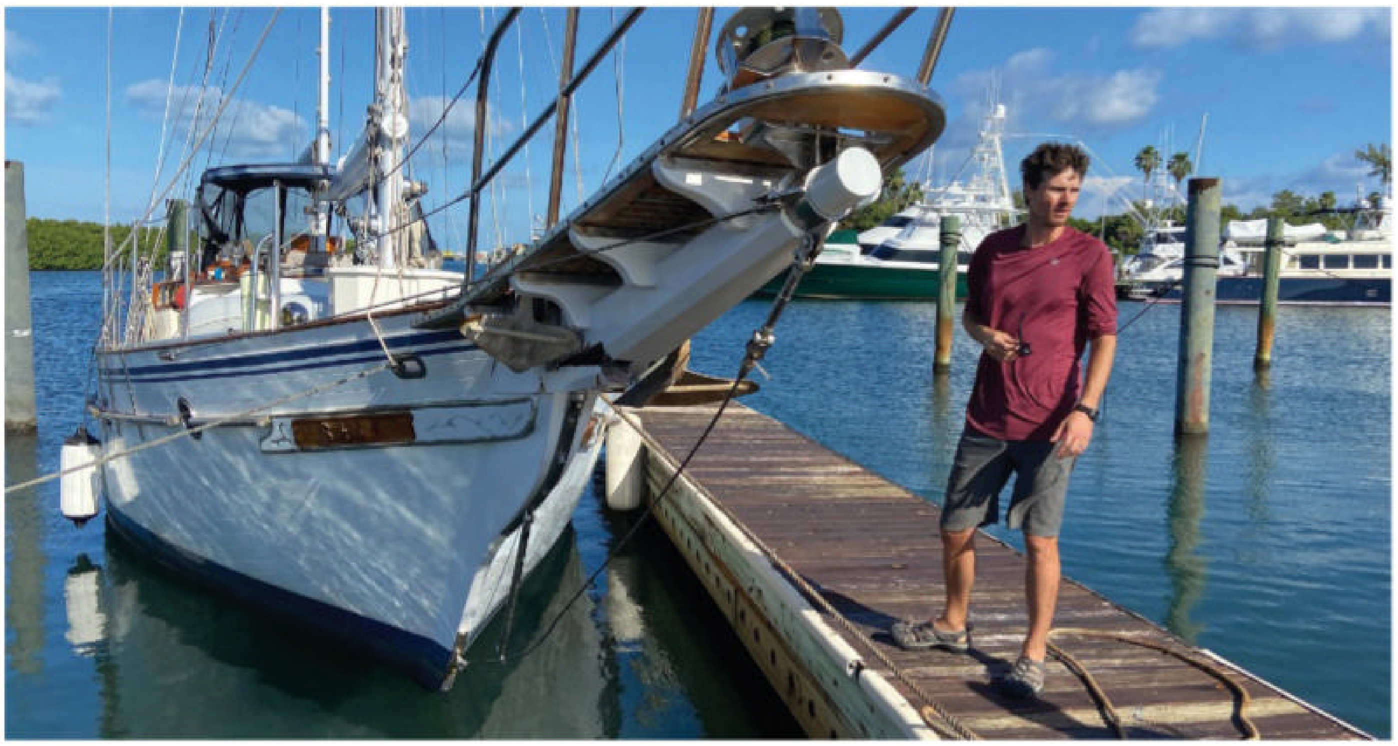
Looking at the rig, it was obvious that the mizzenmast, with its aft-raked spreaders, had helped steady the mainmast via the triatic stay. Certainly, the mainmast's twin backstays were so loose as to be of little use. The bowsprit carried both the forestay and the cutter stay, and had the bobstay snapped, the two ancient halyards we had used to stabilize the rig would have been all that prevented the mast from collapsing. The margaritas we knocked back at Skull's Landing later that day had never tasted so good.

WHAT WE DID RIGHT

- We reacted quickly to support the mast with halyards taken to strong points on deck.
- Making the pan-pan call was the right thing to do under the circumstances.
- It was a good move to bring a handheld VHF, a Garmin inReach, and a tablet with Navionics charts. Redundancy is everything on a seagoing boat.
- There was no panic. We knew what we had to do, and we did it.

WHAT WE DID WRONG

- We went to sea on a poorly prepared boat with aging systems and the bare minimum of navigation and communications gear. And yes, we should have known better.



PHOTOS BY PETER NIELSEN

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AL
TOP 10
2023
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44

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Architect & exterior design : Marc Lombard Yacht Design Group
Interior Design : Christophe Chedal Anglay Design

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THE *SAIL* TOP 10 BEST BOATS OF 2023

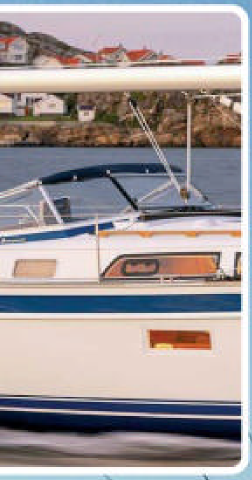
BY THE *SAIL* BOAT REVIEW TEAM

Every year, sailboat manufacturers around the world launch their latest models, and every year, *SAIL* magazine's experienced boat reviewers spend days and weeks learning what's new, talking with boatbuilders, examining the boats top to bottom dockside, and finally taking them sailing. This culminates at the U.S. Sailboat Show in Annapolis, where our review team gets together and makes its final assessments on which boats earn top honors. Results are announced in our January/February issue, and full reviews of the winning boats will be published throughout the year.

For almost 20 years, we've called this awards program *SAIL* Best Boats, but this year, we're refining and renaming this program to better and more fairly represent the boats we've selected. Restricting boats to categories and labels—such as Best Cruising Monohull 30-40 feet and Best Performance Monohull 40-50 feet—doesn't bring our readers the full picture. Too often, defining these boats by categories results in unfairly comparing apples to oranges, sorting boats with very different purposes and design briefs into the same bracket just because of their LOA, and inevitably kicking out some really terrific boats. So, starting this year, we're honoring the Top 10 boats, period. By eliminating the artificial straitjacket of size categories and focusing on what are simply the Top 10, *SAIL* will present readers a more complete and equitable assessment.

So, without further ado, here's the *SAIL* Top 10 Best Boats for 2023. After exploring a mix of bluewater boats, racer/cruisers, speedsters, dinghies, and multihulls, we've settled on the very best the industry has to offer. We were excited to see that designers and builders are steadily pushing the envelope in propulsion, electrical generation, and more sustainable options for getting out on the water. And as always, we admire the ever-evolving innovations and tenacity of the sailboat industry that makes what we do possible.

NEW VISION
TIWAL3R
ACADIA
36



MEET THE REVIEW TEAM

- Logging some 30,000 bluewater cruising miles with her family, *SAIL* Editor-in-Chief **Wendy Mitman Clarke** has raced and cruised all kinds of boats over a lifetime of sailing.
- *SAIL* Cruising Editor **Charlie Doane** has been testing boats for the magazine for over 20 years. An avid coastal and bluewater cruiser, he has crossed the Atlantic seven times and has crewed in several distance races.
- **Tom Dove** became hooked on sailing by a Penguin class dinghy in 1954. He has been reviewing boats of all sizes for *SAIL* magazine since 1988.
- A USCG 100 Ton Master, *SAIL* Charter Editor **Zuzana Prochazka** logs miles on all kinds of boats around the world and never misses an opportunity to raise a sail or crawl into the engine room of a new design.
- Managing Editor **Lydia Mullan** has been involved with *SAIL*'s Best Boats competition for five years, sea trialing all manner of boats. However, her first loves will always be dinghies and performance boats.
- **Phil Gutowski** is founder of BoatRx, a high-tech marine systems company dedicated to increasing the efficiency of onboard power systems.

BENETEAU FIRST 36

Beneteau First 36

The first step in Beneteau's plan to revitalize its legacy performance brand saw the giant French builder partnering with Seascape, a successful upstart Slovenian yard, to rebrand Seascape's existing models as Beneteau Firsts. Now, with the introduction of the new Beneteau First 36, phase two is revealed: a wholly novel racer/cruiser, developed by top French racing designer Sam Manuard and the Seascape team with input from Beneteau. The result is a surprisingly versatile, lively craft that will appeal strongly to dedicated racing sailors as well as performance-oriented cruisers.

Construction is no-holds-barred for a mass-produced boat. The hull and deck are fully cored resin-infused structures, with all supporting bulkheads and interior furniture modules likewise cored and vacuum-infused. The only solid piece in the hull is the keel grid, which is all encompassing, stretching up out of the bilge all the way to deck level to provide maximum security in this disconcerting age of breakaway keels. Either a carbon fiber or aluminum rig can be specified, and a thicket of standard halyards—for masthead and fractional A-sails, a Code 0, a staysail, plus twin jib halyards—make it easy to keep maximum canvas flying forward of the mast. The round-bilge hull carries lots of beam aft on its waterline and begs to jump up on a plane when driving hard downwind.

We were particularly impressed with the First 36's cockpit layout. A removable cockpit table and a pair of removable storage/bench seat extensions make it possible to convert the boat's nerve center from a straight racing layout designed to keep full and shorthanded crews happy to a much more cruiser-friendly space. Likewise, below you'll find good-sized aft staterooms that can be easily shifted from double- or single-berth configurations to simple storage spaces. A proper galley with a separate centerline "refrigeration island," a full nav station, and a full-size double V-berth forward complete a quite cozy, well thought out interior.

And yes, of course, the boat sails like a bandit. An all-around winner in our book.

X-Yachts X4.3

Many boatbuilders looking to capitalize on a successful design will create a "new" model of a boat by changing a few particulars

J/BOATS J/45

on an old hull and then change the name as well. Leave it to the circumspect Danes at X-Yachts to soft-sell an entirely new design, built with all new tooling for hull and deck, by giving it the same name as its immediate predecessor. The previous X4.3 was a bestseller in the X-Yachts "Pure X" range, with over 100 hulls launched worldwide, and the new X4.3 takes what was already an outstanding boat and makes it even better.

The new hull sees maximum beam carried a bit further aft, with a subtle soft or "radius" chine, rather than a simple hard chine, pushing out volume to increase initial stability and boost interior space in the aft cabins. The larger cockpit also has a slightly raised sole, thus increasing clearance over the aft berths. The new deck design incorporates a dodger with improved forward visibility and accommodates overlapping and self-tacking headsails. Forward, a longer integral bowsprit allows for larger off-wind sails to be set, and this combined with a taller mast (or an even taller optional carbon mast) improves light-air performance.

The quality of construction, as on all X-Yachts, is impeccable, with epoxy-infused post-cured structures throughout and a bulletproof galvanized steel keel grid. The boat's interior is elegant and traditional, exquisitely finished, with more opening portlights and improved ventilation. Under sail the X4.3 is fast and nimble, with a newly designed rudder that grips the water tenaciously even when over-pressed. Best of all, given its build quality, the boat is competitively priced.

X-YACHTS X4.3

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BENETEAU, X-YACHTS; J/45 PHOTO BY ONNE VAN DER WAL

J/Boats J/45

It has been a long time since the hallowed Johnstone family has seen fit to throw a larger performance cruising boat into the market. They've done very well in recent years titillating us with compact, competitive one-design sport boats, but let's face it—J/Boat aficionados have been holding their breath, waiting to see if there would ever be a larger J to sail (and maybe even cruise) about in. The new J/45, designed by Alan Johnstone and built by J/Composites in France, does not disappoint. It does a very fine job of splitting the difference between contemporary design idioms and the J/Boats of yore.

Yes, this J is a bit wider than larger Js in the past, but max beam is not carried aft, and there's a fine sensuous taper in the transom that will warm the hearts of traditionalists. Twin wheels control one rudder—deep, grippy, and highly efficient. There is also a fine integral bowsprit for flying the big sails. The result is a boat that is not optimized for just driving hard off the wind, in the modern style, but is more reliably a traditional all-rounder—more slippery in light conditions, heeling a bit more in heavy conditions, but always quick, easy to drive, and sure-footed.

Construction, of course, is rock solid, with a fully resin-infused foam-cored hull and deck, courtesy of the longest-standing SCRIMP infusion system. The interior treatment, composed by the revered French designer Isabelle Racoupeau, is a breakthrough for

HANSE 460

J/Boats. It is decidedly contemporary, understated, very elegant, but wrapped around a purely functional layout. We were all greatly relieved to see a boat like this on the water again.

Hanse 460

The new Hanse 460 is a step up in performance and accommodations among production boats in its class. The hull features a sharp, reverse bow followed by a short chine, and then it flares out into a broad, flat contour aft. This—coupled with a large, easily handled sailplan, excellent placement of winches and line stoppers at the twin wheels, a self-tacking jib, furling mainsail, and huge cockpit and cabin space—produces a comfortable, fast cruiser that can be sailed by a middle-aged couple.

On a brisk autumn day, we motored out on the Chesapeake at an easy 8 knots, performed a few sharp, responsive maneuvers under power and unfurled the sails to a 12-knot breeze. The Hanse 460 accelerated nicely to almost 7 knots, then tacked reliably through 90 degrees. With the in-mast furling mainsail and the self-tacking jib, tacking was a matter of simply turning the wheel. It's actually fun.

Unlike many European cruisers, the Hanse 460 is laid out so the helmsman has everything within easy reach. For shorthanded sailing, this boat is hard to match. Sight lines were excellent, and seating was comfortable. The cockpit tables drop to seat level so you can sleep outside under the stars on a spacious berth.

The interior is quite pleasant, with the galley along the starboard side and a large table and seat to port. Everything is finished attractively (Hanse offers a huge selection of colors and fabrics), and there's lots of light from the hull windows and plentiful opening hatches. The standard layout has a big double berth in the forward cabin and two more double cabins aft, with two head compartments. Other layouts are available.

The Hanse 460 will please a lot of sailors, especially with the price made possible by today's strong dollar/Euro exchange rates.

Hallberg-Rassy 400

Hallberg-Rassy's newest addition, the 400, quickly follows the Germán Frers-designed center-cockpit 40C, incorporating the good looks and proven elements of plumb bow for maximum waterline, integral bowsprit, and twin rudders in an aft-cockpit version that seamlessly marries traditional bluewater cruising experience with contemporary design and interior trends. Combined with this Swedish builder's reputation for bulletproof construction, the result is a powerful, elegant, fun, go-anywhere machine.

Hallberg-Rassy's ethos has long been that comfort and sailability add up to safe, happy sailors, and the 400 manifests this inside and out.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF HANSE YACHTS, HALLBERG-RASSY

HALLBERG-RASSY 400

© Jean-Marie LIOT / Dufour-yachts

BEST BOATS SAIL TOP 10 2023 WINNERS

DUFOUR 37

PHOTO COURTESY OF DUFOUR YACHTS

Though it follows its contemporaries with twin helms, this boat's cockpit feels ergonomically sensible and safe while still providing all the entertaining room one needs. Everything is practical and uncluttered, geared to making sailhandling straightforward for one or two people.

This carries through the sailplan as well; the headsail can be either slightly overlapping or self-tacking (a Code 0 is optional), and the mainsail traditional slab reefing or in-mast furling; on our test boat in Annapolis, the vertically battened Elvstrøm main reefed easily with the Seldén in-mast system. A split Dyneema backstay with simple but forceful block adjustment, coupled with the mainsheet traveler forward of the companionway, allow for maximum sail trim and control (and tweakable fun).

Below, offshore features such as beautifully crafted fiddles that double as beefy handholds and comfy settees that quickly transform into secure sea berths are coupled with a flexible layout. Owners can opt for one or two heads and two or three sleeping cabins; the forward cabin comes in three different layouts, including an owner's version with centerline double bed and en-suite head with shower. Serious cruisers can convert an aft cabin into an enormous work and storage space.

For many sailors, Hallberg-Rassy means proven offshore experience and pure sailing chops delivered in a solid, thoughtful, handsome whole. The 400 continues that legacy with this flexible layout and competitively priced package.

Dufour 37

If you look at the specs of the new Dufour 37, you may scratch your head. How is a 34-foot LOA boat called a 37? No worries though, this little yacht is mighty, feeling and sailing like a bigger model.

The first surprise is how the boat feels on deck and below. The cockpit is spacious with long settees and twin wheels that open up the traffic flow. The folding table between the settees is massive—perfect for entertaining at anchor. And let's not forget the drop transom where the chef can stand out of the way while working on the plancha grill, a big boat feature to be sure.

The interior is deceptively large as well. The owner's suite in the bow has bifurcated doors for easy entry. With these open, you experience the full length of the boat when you descend the companionway as the eye is drawn forward. There's another enormous dining table, and the compact galley to port has made room for double sinks and bottle storage—a nice touch. Three cabins are offered, but two plus a storage room would work better for couples.

The Z-Spar rig holds a powerful higher-aspect mainsail and self-tacking jib that make shorthanded sailing a snap. In just 9 knots of true breeze, we slipped along at 6.5 knots on a beam reach and

NAUTITECH
NAUTITECH

PHOTO COURTESY OF NAUTITECH

flat water. The gennaker on a top-down furler can be used up to 60 degrees AWA and kept us moving along smartly at nearly 7 knots. She was comfortable and dry throughout the sail.

Small is the new big, and the Dufour 37 delivers with some impressive features you'd not expect on an entry model. The only thing that isn't big about the Dufour 37 is the price. Expect a well-optioned version to come in just around $200,000, and that means you can have a lot of fun for not a lot of money.

Nautitech 44 Open

The latest addition to the Nautitech line of cruising cats is the 44 Open created by naval architect Marc Lombard. The model leans heavily on elements that have been previous crowd pleasers like the "Open" concept launched nearly a decade ago. It has proven immensely popular because it shifts and reprioritizes the use of space by making the saloon smaller and the cockpit bigger. It's a Nautitech trademark and makes sense for how and where cats are used.

The 44 Open is a good-looking boat with a sleek profile, and it's right in the sweet spot for cruising couples. It's also designed for performance, with a higher bridgedeck to avoid pounding, deeper keels for better tracking, and twin helms out on the hulls from where it's easy to drive, especially when docking.

The sailplan includes a fully battened mainsail, a self-tacking jib on a cabintop track, and a Code 0 on a furler. Expect to point to within 50 degrees AWA and see 9-knot speeds in 15-18 knots of true breeze. The optional Code 0 drives the boat up to about 70 degrees AWA. Under power, the 60-hp engines (upgraded) push the boat at 11 knots at 3,000 rpm so there's plenty of power to get home quickly.

The helm stations meet you as soon as you come up from the swim steps. They're well placed with small biminis for cover, but the seats could use a bit of redesign. They create a pinch point when

SYSTEMS: LOOKING FORWARD WITH 48 VOLTS

Pulling up seat cushions and floorboards on more than 25 new sailing yachts at the U.S. Sailboat Show in Annapolis, I was happy to find a few manufacturers who have modernized their boats to follow the broad trend of electrification seen in other motive industry markets. For instance, the Slovenian builder Elan has partnered with Oceanvolt to offer an electric propulsion option for any of their new boats straight from the factory. A 48V lithium battery pack supplies the power and is often installed as a hybrid configuration with a diesel generator.

These hybrid systems make sense. The energy required for propulsion is only a fraction of the total power consumed on a cruising boat. It's the other house loads that put a drain on our electrical systems. Refrigeration, lights, pumps, and electronics are essentials. Yet, air conditioning and electric cooking have become more of an expectation among new boat buyers. These onboard comfort systems require lots of power, and it all needs to come from somewhere.

Most of the new cruising boats are fit with diesel generators. Still, I found two other manufacturers who offer a 48V lithium battery bank to power everything. Balance Catamarans takes the cake for a clean and robust energy system with a battery pack that gets its charge from two main-engine mounted 48VDC, 9kW-producing Integrel generators. This configuration eliminates the need for a separate genset and provides rapid charging to a battery bank that keeps all the systems powered on, including the air conditioning and electric range. Neel Trimarans offer a similar system as an upgrade on the build sheet of their new boats.

These fast-charging hybrid power systems are the future aboard cruising yachts, and we are already committing to a cleaner and quieter boating future thanks to these intrepid manufacturers.—*Phil Gutowski*

NEEL 43 TRIMARAN

PHOTOS COURTESY OF NEEL TRIMARANS; ELAN YACHTS

BALANCE 442

passing up to the cockpit, and they're too small for two and too big for one. Another place for improvement is the access to the windlass on the foredeck. It's tucked well under a fiberglass lip that doesn't open, and let's face it, windlasses require TLC from time to time.

Otherwise, the 44 Open is packed with unique features. Favorites include the generous owner's suite, the well-laid-out galley, and the optional "smart room" that will store all sorts of cruising gear and spares and is worth the price of admission. Overall, a serious cruising couple has a lot to love in this design, and it should be on the shortlist for anyone planning on doing distance voyaging.

NEEL 43 Trimaran

Trimarans are known for having a good turn of speed but also for not having much livable space, which may be why so few of them are out distance cruising. French builder NEEL has been working to change that mindset. With the new baby of the family, the NEEL 43, they've dialed in a good combination of comfort and easy, fun, fast sailing.

Step into the cockpit and you'll be surprised that it has nearly the same dimensions as a cat. There's plenty of room for 10 people to mingle, and six can gather for a meal. The helm station is offset onto the starboard bulkhead, so the driver remains part of the social activity in the cockpit but still has good visibility when sailing.

Three cabins, one head, a compact galley, and a fair-sized saloon make up the interior, most of which is on the same level. Below the cabin sole, the immense "basement" houses the engine room and utility spaces. Everything is labeled and very accessible, so it won't be a punishment to do maintenance. As an upgrade, the NEEL 43 offers a 48-volt system, lithium batteries, multiple solar panels, and an Integrel supersized alternator that eliminates the need for a separate genset. This innovative system reduces carbon emissions and extends time at anchor without constant combustion-engine charging.

Fully commissioned and FOB East Coast, the NEEL 43 is $575,000; if you add the whizbang lithium powerpack and Integrel, you can expect to pay another $100,000. That's not an extreme price for what is a unique cruising experience—one that can keep your carbon footprint small and your hair flying back as the three hulls eat up the miles.

Balance 442

Balance Catamarans launched their 482 last year and heard two things: 1) YES! And 2) Can you make a smaller one? So, this year, they introduced the new mini-me, the Balance 442, and it's all that was hoped for.

There's a long list of smart stuff built into the 442—a Karver hook that makes it easier to raise and the lower the mainsail, twin daggerboards that help pointing ability, and rigid solar panels raised off the deck and therefore ventilated from below. There are also options for one or two Integrel supercharged alternators that eliminate the need for a generator, and an optional 48-volt system with a DC-to-DC converter for 12V appliances. The incredible Versa-Helm is a Balance trademark that lets you drive from the top of the helm station or from down in the cockpit where it's warm and dry.

Perhaps the best part of the 442 is the sailing. Not too many cats will do 11 knots in 16 knots of true wind at 80 degrees AWA. Fewer still will hold onto 6.5 knots of speed at 35 degrees AWA

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BALANCE CATAMARANS, TIWAL SAILBOATS

BEST BOATS SAIL TOP 10 2023 WINNERS

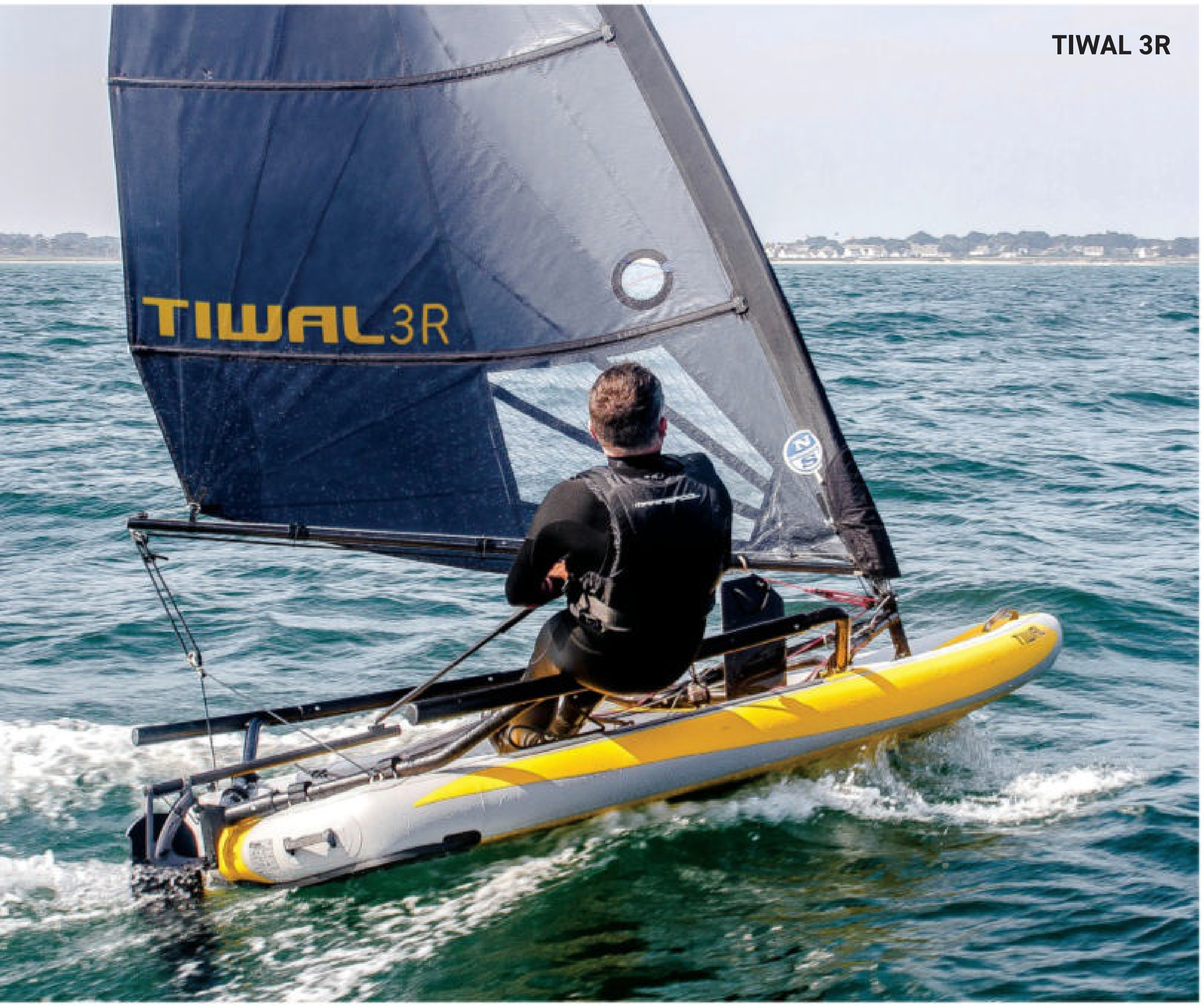
in the same breeze and without making much leeway. When you don't have to tack through 120 degrees, you stand a chance of actually making upwind progress, and that's refreshing on a multihull.

Under power, the Balance 442 makes good use of her twin 40-hp Yanmar diesels, but if you upgrade to the Integrel power management system, you'll also need to opt for the 45-hp engines. The 48-volt system is worth investigating, as is adding the solar panels and the twin Integrels, because with all this, you can expect to stay at anchor for three days without needing to charge (not using air conditioning), and when you do charge, you can do so in 90 minutes.

Like her bigger siblings, the Balance 442 is all about smart systems, livable layouts, and sassy sailing. The sail away price is $1.2 million, which still puts her below many of her performance cat competitors. If you're looking for smart living and fast sailing, you may have found it.

Tiwal 3R

It will certainly raise some eyebrows to see an inflatable dinghy on this list alongside cruising cats and production racer/cruisers, but the Tiwal 3R has earned its accolades. Building on the foundation of the Tiwal 3, the 3R is a racing version engineered specially for competitive sailors who want to fine-tune their sailing. And with 2,500 Tiwals already on the water, many of whom participated in last summer's Tiwal Cup championships, there's no shortage of demand.



TIWAL 3R

The boat has a new sail that requires more structure and support in the hull, so designer Marion Escoffier also drafted an all-new aluminum exoskeleton. The new cage led to new sail controls (including a sporty vang traveler). All of this means this inflatable boat can reach up to 14 knots. To top it off, they've also designed an app to help Tiwal owners meet up and share information. For a boat this size, the innovation is a cut above.

But don't let the performance features lead you to believe this is a no-nonsense racing machine. It's as playful as it is sporty. Plus, with rugged inflatable hulls, tipping, crashing, and beaching are all consequence-free. It's light enough to be righted by a child, and two sail size options ensure that no matter who is sailing the boat, they won't be overpowered.

So, not only is this boat a genuine performance dinghy, it's also a great learner's boat. Not to mention that it can be packed into two large suitcases and assembled in minutes (cruisers looking for the ultimate beach toy, take note). Sure, it doesn't have the option for a four-cabin layout, but we'd say that pound-for-pound this is the best conceived, sportiest, and most fun boat on the market.

At 110 years old, the storied pilot cutter Jolie Brise *powers off the wind. Photo by Rick Tomlinson, courtesy Dauntsey's School.*

JOLIE BRISE

BLUE COLLAR, BLUE BLOOD

Born as a workhorse, the pilot cutter *Jolie Brise* went on to win everything in sight and continues to awe those who sail her today.

By Tom Cunliffe

JOLIE·BRISE
SOUTHAMPTON

In 1851, the New York pilot schooner *America* sailed to England, beat the Brits at their own prestigious yacht race (which came to be known as the America's Cup), and launched an evolution of the East Coast's pilot craft into vessels that were the envy of the world. Their development was driven by direct competition to get their company's pilots out to distant shipping lanes before any others while retaining the seakeeping capacity to stay out no matter what the weather.

In western Europe, the pilot cutter also had its season in the sun. From around 1850 until World War I, these craft, generally around 50 feet on deck, took off, outstripping their forebears in performance, seakeeping ability, and sheer good looks. England's Bristol Channel produced some memorable craft (and I've owned a Bristol Channel pilot boat of similar vintage and sailed her across the North Atlantic to America via Greenland), but over in France, Le Havre had the final word with a 56-foot cutter named *Jolie Brise*. This workhorse-turned-racehorse went on to win yachting's most coveted trophies and, in perhaps her greatest achievement, save 10 souls, becoming one of sailing's most storied and significant vessels.

I've served as skipper aboard *Jolie Brise*, and I can say unequivocally that it's hard to imagine any working gaff cutter standing against her in light weather or heavy. Powerfully built on grown frames interspersed with steamed timbers, this glorious vessel was never to fulfil her original purpose.

Launched in 1913 as the swan song of Albert Paumelle—probably the greatest name among French pilot cutter builders—she was intended as a pilot boat engaged in the rough-and-tumble competition of seeking ships night and day in all weathers, putting pilots on board, and the devil take the cutter who arrived second. This was not to be, however. Even though *JB*, as her people know her, represented the pinnacle of pilot cutter development, his-

PHOTOS (L) RICK TOMLINSON, COURTESY DAUNTSEY'S SCHOOL; (R) COURTESY TOM CUNLIFFE

Jolie Brise, *left. Above, a young Hannah Cunliffe stands watch in Bay of Biscay.*

(L to R) Tom and Hannah Cunliffe aboard in 1981; Hannah supervises the wine offloading back in England; Tom helps Mike at the helm as it breezes up.

PHOTOS COURTESY TOM CUNLIFFE

tory overtook her, and she was never to stand out bravely into the English Channel in pilotage livery. Instead, she found international fame in an unexpected direction.

After a short year or two working inshore off Le Havre, she was sold off by the pilots in the early years of World War I to a tuna fisherman on the Biscay coast where she fished as best she could until 1923. It was from this backwater that she had her stroke of luck, and her fortunes came good in a big way when she was purchased by E.G. Martin.

Martin was a giant of a man, standing 6 feet 7 inches and built to match. His plans outstripped the usual yachting round of inshore racing for those who wanted it and gentle cruising for any who didn't. Martin had vision. He recognized that the real test of a yacht was to pit her against her peers on the high seas in whatever weather came along, and he wanted the sort of vessel that could do it. In *Jolie Brise*, he wasn't disappointed.

Along with a few like-minded chums, in 1925 he helped inaugurate what he called "The Ocean Race," soon to be known as the Fastnet Race. Starting from Cowes on the Isle of Wight and racing to Plymouth in Southwest England by way of the Fastnet Light on its rock off southwest Ireland, this was exactly the sort of seafaring *Jolie Brise* was born for. Over a windy 600-mile course, she walked away with the silverware against a small fleet of yachts.

The Ocean Racing Club, founded among the competitors (and of which Martin was the first commodore), soon became the world-famous Royal Ocean Racing Club, with the premises it still occupies in London's high-end Mayfair district. *Jolie Brise* went on to win two more of these great events, and under Martin's hand she also earned her first Cruising Club of America (CCA) Blue Water Medal.

In 1926, Martin sailed her to America, where she competed in her first Bermuda Race. But it wasn't until 1932 that she etched her name irrevocably into that event's history as its hero.

Her Finest Hour

In 1932, *Jolie Brise*'s new owner was a young English aristocrat bearing the unlikely name of Henry Robert Somers Fitzroy de Vere Somerset. Known at sea simply as Bobby, he was directly descended from dukes—the top of the tree back home—and had been decorated for his service on the Western Front in World War I. His largely amateur crew included no less a luminary than Sherman Hoyt. The race looked to be a good one for the cutter; a reaching course all the way was going to give *Jolie Brise* a fair chance of a handicap win over the assembled schooners and yawls of the CCA.

In rough going on the first night out, *Jolie Brise* was sailing strongly and seemed to be well placed. She was shortening down when she sighted what she took to be distress flares being fired to leeward. Giving away a good position for what could turn out to be a fool's errand rather than a rescue is never an easy decision, but Somerset did not hesitate. He heaved his 9-foot tiller up to weather and ran down to see what was happening.

Three miles to leeward he fell in with the schooner *Adriana* blazing fiercely from a conflagration that had started when the cabin fireplace cooked the contents of an adjacent oilskin locker. By the time *Jolie Brise* arrived, the crew were preparing to abandon ship to a dinghy and were not doing at all well. Realizing that they must be taken off immediately, Somerset brought the heavy, engineless cutter under *Adriana*'s lee, keeping vital way on with his

main but backing his headsails to slow her enough for the crew to jump. And jump they did, while the schooner's helmsman, Clarence Kozaly, kept her glued to her straight course. The yachts' rails banged together with what must have been a sickening crunch, the topmast rigging made contact, and *Jolie Brise*'s tarred hemp deadeye lanyards momentarily took fire.

Ten of *Adriana*'s 11 crew leapt to safety as she slowly sailed past. Kozaly finally left the helm with the yachts several feet apart, but he was too late. He made a valiant leap but fell into the gap. Hoyt threw him a line, but Kozaly's heavy clothing dragged him under, and as the cutter gathered way to safety, his grip on the rope failed, and he was lost. After doing his duty to save 10 lives, Kozaly lost his own.

This heroic action saw Somerset rewarded with a gold watch by the president of the United States as well as a lifesaving medal from the U.S. Department of State, while the ship received her second CCA Blue Water Medal.

As the story of this remarkable pilot cutter ran down the years of the 20th century, she passed through various short-term ownerships, survived World War II, and then was bought by sympathetic Portuguese sailors during the winter of 1946-47. There she remained until the mid-1970s, until a pending revolution in Portugal left her owners fearing she would be commandeered as a symbol of luxurious decadence. Arrangements were made for her to come under the wing of Dauntsey's School in Wiltshire, England. And so began the story of her life in modern times, which—much to my great fortune—included passing some of that time with me.

A Vintage Passage

After a major refit in Devon, *Jolie Brise* was ready to take up her new role as a sail training vessel under the leadership of a farsighted schoolteacher named Bill Parrish. At the time, I was dividing my work between examining yachtmasters for the government certification scheme and running a large Brixham sailing trawler. It so happened that I rafted this vessel up with *JB* in a crowded harbor one evening in the spring of 1981. Bill, who it turned out had an agenda, invited me to sail with them on the annual all-comers race around the Isle of Wight in June.

On the day, the weather didn't suit us, and we weren't placed on the 60-mile course, but Bill must have been satisfied that I knew a gaff from a bowsprit because he asked if I would take the boat to Spain and back for him later in the summer. Of course, I would. He needn't have asked, but what, I wanted to know, was the purpose of the voyage?

"We'll give you £2,000 in cash," he began. This was 1981, remember. It was a lot of money, but it got better. "We want you to spend it on wine in the Rioja region," he went on, "then bring it back for us to sell to the parents of the school students and raise money for the ship."

No sailor worth the name is going to turn down a deal like that, so we signed on some crew from among my raceboat mates to augment the school's trainees, and off we went. The first leg of the 1,200-mile round trip went smoothly and saw us berthed at the smart yacht club in Bilbao.

I had no clue how to set about sourcing the wine, but *Jolie Brise* saved me the trouble. Señor Urgato, the commodore, had already recognized her. He had raced against her years before, and nothing was going to be too much trouble. After sorting out an advantageous price for a fine variety of vintages, he leaned on the authorities to grant us an easy passage through the inevitable export bureaucracy. All he asked in recompense was that I share a bottle of the 1952 Grand Reserve Berberana with him. The perfect gentleman. What could I say?

We loaded 150 cases of Spain's finest into the main saloon to keep the weight amidships. Then we chocked it off, only to realize that to reach the galley with its ancient coal-fired range, it would be necessary to execute a sort of infantry crawl across the top of the stack. This proved a challenge for the likes of me, who is generously equipped in terms of human tonnage. No such difficulties assailed my 2-year-old daughter or my wife, who was in charge of cooking. Somehow, the meals kept on coming as we squared away up the Bay towards home. We spent a day comfortably hove-to in

PHOTOS COURTESY TOM CUNLIFFE

Neil Graham notes the benefits of the cargo. Jolie Brise *in her element.*

a gale at the north end of Biscay, then spread ever more sail as we sped up-channel. One night watch in the waters where she'd been built to work, she ran off 40 miles in four hours. During much of this spectacular sprint, the wake was a road of fire under the stars, and the mate, a veteran of many a Fastnet and at least one Whitbread Round-the-World Race, took his watch in a kitchen chair. It was not even lashed to the rail, so steadily did she reach. There was no way he was dragging any sail off her, and it was too dark to see the topmast bending, but we overtook more than one struggling coaster that night as we swept by with all of history thrumming in our sails.

JOLIE BRISE

Built Paumelle 1913

Length on Deck 56 ft

Waterline length 48 ft

Sparred length 74 ft

Beam 15 ft 2 in

Draft 10 ft 2 in

Displacement 97,000 lb

Sailing Into the Future

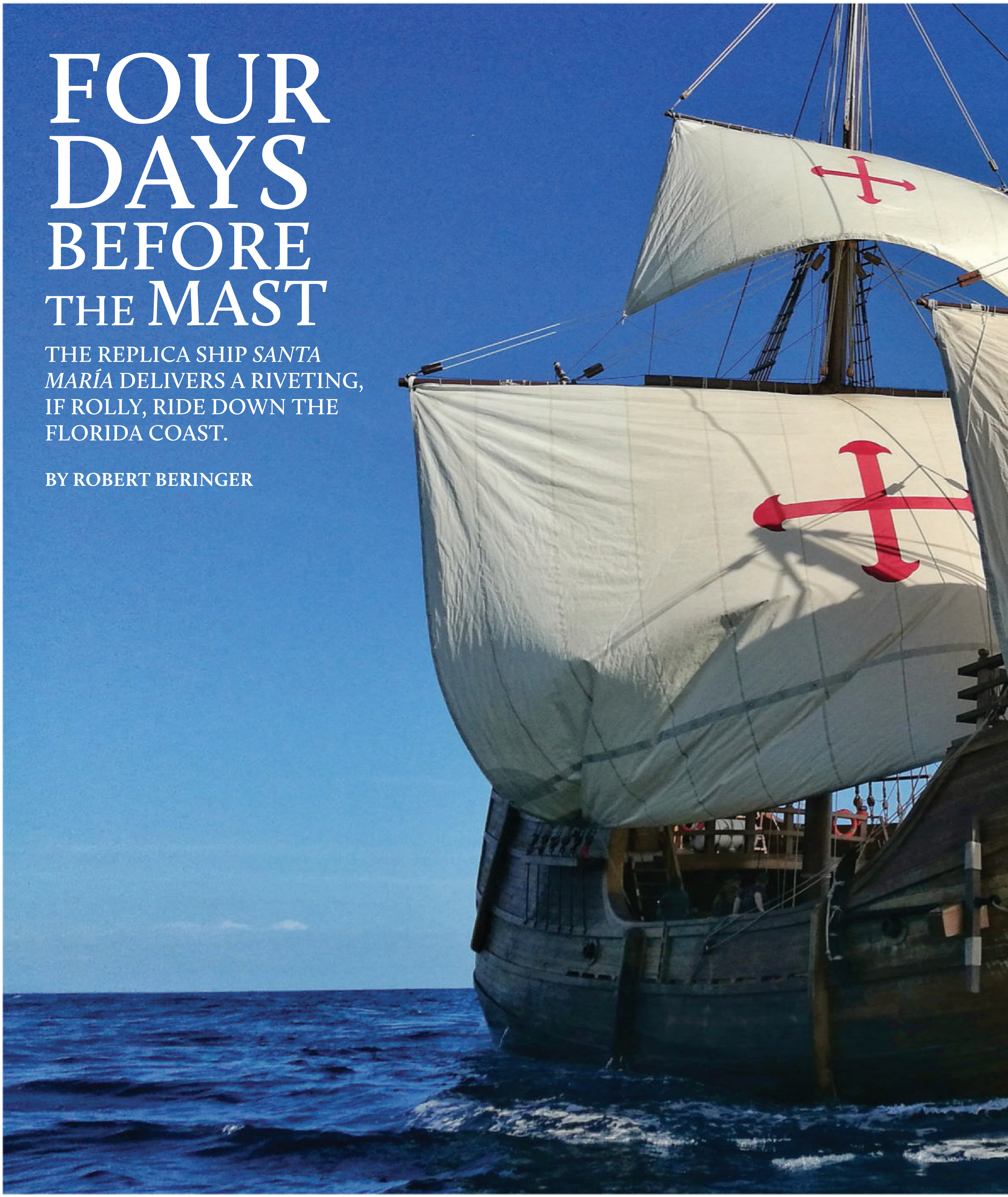
In the 40 years since that mad dash, *Jolie Brise* has distinguished herself as a world-renowned sail training yacht. She has sailed in six transatlantic races and won the international Tall Ships Races four times. Her captain for 27 years has been the inimitable Toby Marris, a man of whom Paumelle, E.G. Martin, and Bobby Somerset would have approved wholeheartedly. Today, *JB* is still maintained to top standard and is delivering the best of sea education under Captain Toby.

Last year I made a video on board. I hadn't sailed on her for 40 years, and I suppose I'd forgotten something of her magic, but when the wind blew up and we bore away onto a beam reach with the sheets eased, she took off like the thoroughbred she is. Coming up for 110 years old, she was as thrilling as she'd been that starry night when we ran 10 knots off the reel from midnight to dawn. I looked at the faces of her young crew. They were grinning from ear to ear. AL

Watch Tom's video of *Jolie Brise* at *youtu.be/ZzyGJeQg7bc*

PHOTOS (L) COURTESY TOM CUNLIFFE; (R) RICK TOMLINSON, COURTESY DAUNTSEY'S SCHOOL

JOLIE BRISE



FOUR DAYS BEFORE THE MAST

THE REPLICA SHIP *SANTA MARÍA* DELIVERS A RIVETING, IF ROLLY, RIDE DOWN THE FLORIDA COAST.

BY ROBERT BERINGER

The replica ship Santa María *under sail offshore. Photo by Ángel Rosa, courtesy of Fundación Nao Victoria.*

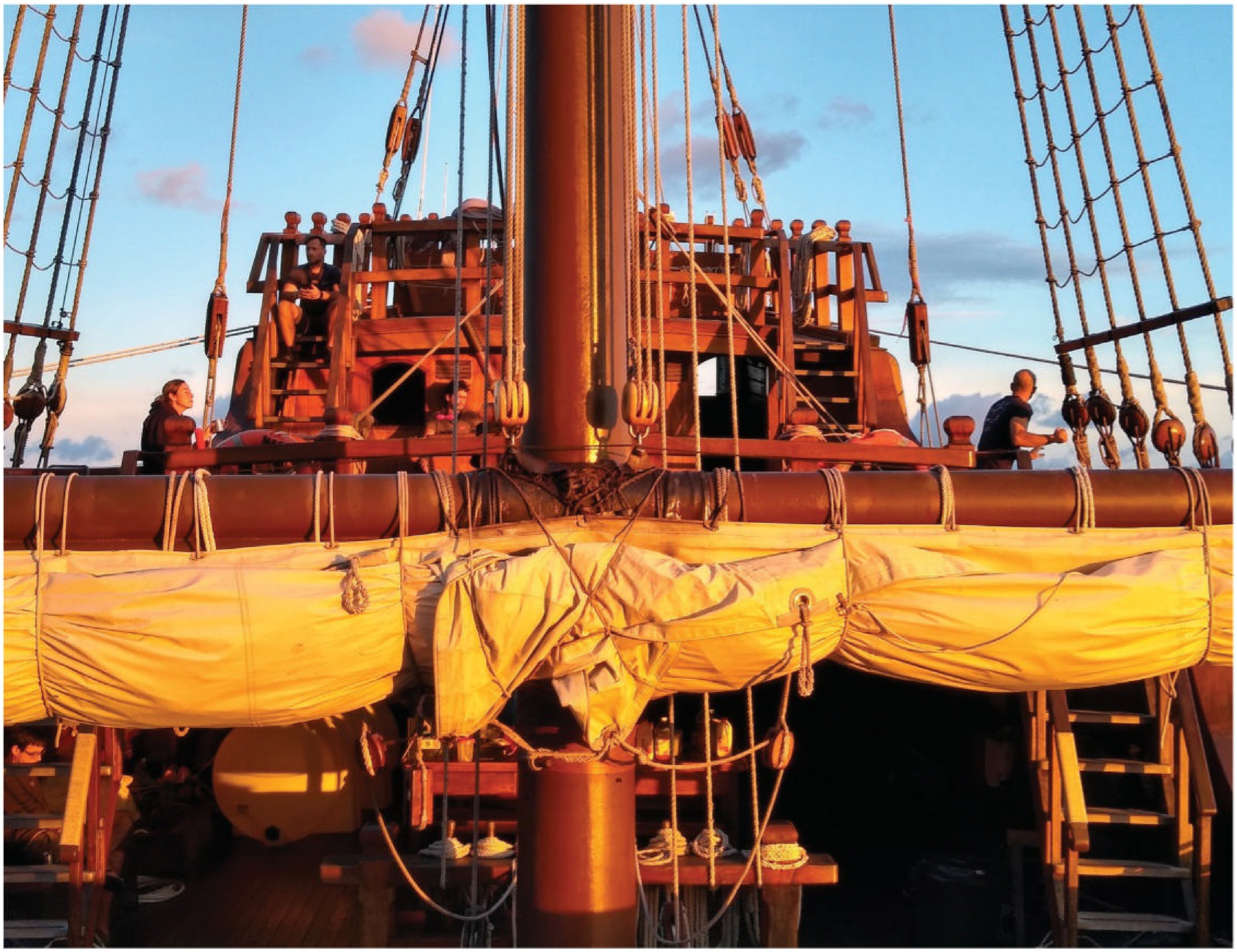


PHOTO BY ROBERT BERINGER

It's probably the first world history lesson that U.S. kids get in elementary school: In 1492 America was "discovered" by Christopher Columbus in the *Niña*, *Pinta*, and the flagship *Santa María*. He was lost and would never set foot in America, but to his dying day believed that the indigenous people of the Bahamas, Caribbean, and Central America were residents of India. He spent several months exploring the New World on that first voyage, but the *Santa María* was never to see Spain again, as it ran onto a reef near Cap-Haïtien, Haiti, and sank on Christmas morning.

But a version of the *Santa María* is sailing again. In 2018, the Fundación Nao Victoria in Huelva, Spain, launched a 200-ton, full-scale replica of the *Santa María*, which has spent the last few years touring North and Central America and the Caribbean, acting as a floating museum and goodwill ambassador. During 12 months of construction, the shipwrights, carpenters, ropemakers, and mechanics were faithful to the design and dimensions of the original wherever possible—a painstakingly difficult task, as the *Santa María* was never found and its plans lost to history.

When I first see her resting at the pier in Jacksonville, Florida, the sight is equal parts breathtaking and unsettling. Nothing outwardly betrays the ship's 21st-century construction, right down to the whip staff at the ship's helm and the bridge where Columbus wrote his log. There it rests in front of the Hyatt Hotel—a time traveler from the Age of Discovery.

I'm here to meet her as a ride-along guest for the four-day trip from Jacksonville to Fort Lauderdale, where she will be decommissioned, loaded onto a transport ship, and returned to Spain.

In the galley, I meet with Ángel Rosa, project manager of the *Santa María*, and he is troubled.

"In a few days there will be some bad weather coming, and there are no berths available in Fort Lauderdale," he laments. Further complicating things are pandemic restrictions that have left them sailing with a skeleton crew of nine (about half the regular crew of 17). They're on a tight timeline, and the decision is made to depart today while Ángel drives ahead and searches for a suitable slip somewhere in south Florida.

I have my own troubled moment as we drift away from the pier, waving at Ángel and realizing that he may have been the only one on board who speaks English. I walk around the deck nervously looking at these strangers I'll be sailing with for the coming days.

"Buen día a todas, mi nombre es Roberto," I say sheepishly. "Hi Roberto, I'm Miguel," the captain replies brightly. "Welcome aboard." What a relief! Most of the crew speak English far better than my own wretched high school Spanish.

Rolling Down the Coast

Unlike her namesake, this *Santa María* discreetly carries modern marine accoutrements that make sailing her not unlike other vessels of her size: twin 250-hp diesel engines, GPS, AIS, VHF radio, radar, liferaft, EPIRB, and a generator—even a bow thruster.

Still, on this voyage there would many lessons about traveling on an authentic, square-rigged carrack. The first is that it takes a lot of people to sail it. Columbus sailed with 40, we have 10, so the plan is to leave the sails furled and run the twin John Deeres the whole way.

The second lesson is that the ship is very tender and will roll badly in a rough sea. Soon after departure, the crew gathers to lower three yardarms to almost deck level to help reduce that roll. Pedro, the first mate, directs six of us as we lower the giant metal appendage; the feel of thick hemp in my hand is a thrill I won't soon forget.

PHOTO BY ROBERT BERINGER

Qieni strongarms the steering whip (left) as Capitan Miguel, Christian, and Ian watch. Morning casts a golden glow on the ship (opposite page).

The sun dips below Florida and the following seas do their best to send me to the wailing rail, but I remembered to take a Dramamine, which never fails. Several crew go to the lower deck, fiddle with the tiller and, surprise, along with that 15th-century whip staff, we have a 21st-century autopilot that will run off the alternators and steer us all the way.

Miguel puts me on his watch, and in the ruddy light of the navigation cabin, he confides that it's been a tough voyage. Since the pandemic started, the number of paid visitors has been off at almost every port. In Mexico, the ship and crew were hired to appear in a historical miniseries about Hernán Cortés, but production was shut down after only a few weeks of filming. They returned to the East Coast and sailed up to Maine intending to cross back to Spain last summer, but a bad storm season put the kibosh on that. Instead, they were directed to sail south and catch a ride on a transport ship.

> *I've done a lot of sailing, but never so far above the water.*

At times, the ship's history as one of the vessels that opened the door to the devastation of many Caribbean indigenous peoples, including the Taíno in what is now Hispaniola, made them the source of controversy. Despite the desire to promote goodwill and the commonalities between the Old World and New, they angered Native Americans in Bucksport, Maine, who protested the presence of the ship at Maine's bicentennial celebration last summer. A statement posted by tribal leader Maulian Dana for the Penobscot Indian Nation read in part, "Celebrating the statehood of Maine cannot be done without telling the truth about the history and honoring the Indigenous People. The sailing of this ship is not an honor, especially in our homeland on a river that is our relative and bears our name."

The seas are well aft of the beam but they're big, and we roll heavily like a very slow metronome. I've done a lot of sailing, but never so far above the water. We stagger about the bridge, reaching for whatever to brace ourselves. On one roll I miss my grab hold and hit the deck, receiving a small lump on my noggin. Welcome to the *Santa María*.

Breakfast is at the beginning of my next watch, and the crew chat about the day and their lives, all in Spanish, of course. Occasionally one will kindly fill me in with something like, "We are talking about what we will do in Fort Lauderdale." The food is simple, hot, and nutritious. There is no cook, per se; they take turns making meals, all of which feature a fresh-baked loaf of bread. They eat like rabbits and scatter back to their posts.

We approach Cape Canaveral and the lone rectangular visage of NASA's Vehicle Assembly Building (VAB), the largest building in Florida, where rockets have been built since 1965. Launch complexes

Clockwise from left: Robert (in orange) and some of the crew; Capitan Miguel discusses the day's chores with crewmember Miguel; Christian and Rodrigo grease the gear on the main yardarm.

and a lighthouse are nearby, but this far out, the VAB is the only visible object that tracks our progress through the day. The ship has been this way several times, but never when a launch occurred. I can only imagine what it would look like from here to see SpaceX's Falcon 9 booster rocket carefully land on its drone ship.

With a 10-foot draft, we have no choice but to stand well offshore and enter the Gulf Stream, where the goin' is slowin'. Our speed drops from 6 knots to 2.5. The day is calm, but the ship's undersized rudder makes it difficult to hold course, and we move snake-like through the water on a 40-degree arc. No one complains, however; they know the whip staff requires up to three strong crew members to operate, an exhausting job that no one desires, so it's accepted that the SOG is reduced.

The day passes. I climb to the poop and watch the world go by. Flying fish skitter across the water ahead of our bow. We pull abreast of Melbourne, Florida, as the sun sinks low. Capitan Miguel looks concerned as he lights a cigarette.

"We still don't have a place to dock," he says. "And bad weather is coming Friday and Saturday with strong winds and big seas." There aren't a lot of marinas that can accommodate a historical replica ship with a 10-foot draft, so we're all hoping that Ángel, who has arrived in Fort Lauderdale, will scare up something for us. I naively suggest anchoring out, but he shakes his head. "No, it's difficult to anchor, or to find an appropriate spot [in the ICW] that would have enough room for a ship like this."

The stars heave into view and Venus shines like a searchlight from a rescue helicopter. I scurry up to the bridge for the first watch. Marga Feliu, the lone woman crewmember, has put on a medley of American swing tunes from the '40's, and I think of my parents as youngsters, dancing away without a care in the world.

At 2230, Orion rises from the sea with faithful Sirius by his side. Another design quirk of the carrack is that the fo'c'sle completely blocks all forward vision from the helm. The only way to overcome this is by constantly pacing from bulwark to bulwark and craning your neck. By midnight I'm exhausted and crawl in my bunk.

Making an Entrance

The sun cracks the sea at 0730, and the *Santa María* glows a golden orange in its light. In the early hours our course was changed to get us out of the Gulf Stream and speed up. We're barely 5 miles from the beach and condos are clearly visible on the shore; the sea remains in a kindly state.

But by late afternoon clouds have moved in, and sun dogs warn of bad weather coming. Wind and waves increase from the east, the condos glow to the west. By dark, it's hard to distinguish the blinking non-navigational lights from the ones marking the inlets. What would we do without GPS?

It was the coast of Hispaniola past which Columbus ran on that fateful Christmas night and, exhausted, went down to get some sleep. At midnight in dead calm, the current gently carried the ship onto one of the sand banks. Despite all efforts to free her, "the timbers opened and the ship was lost." They unloaded the *Santa María* and used her wooden planks to build a fort, leaving a contingent of crewmembers to search for gold until they returned a year later.

It's our last night on the ocean, and I feel energized. I have no problem staying alert until midnight when the middle watch shows, and I wish them "buenas noches y hasta mañana."

In the coal black of the bunk cabin, the many sounds of a ship in motion surround me, and it's hard to sleep. The heavy weather has arrived, and I'm restless knowing that we are due to arrive at Port Everglades inlet on my final morning watch.

Nature calls at dawn, and I know it's bad out there because

PHOTOS BY ROBERT BERINGER

PHOTO BY ROBERT BERINGER

the main deck hatch has been sealed to keep out the rain. I poke my nose out of the aft hatch and see that everyone is in full foul weather gear. The rain is coming down in buckets, and green water is sloshing through the scuppers.

The only heads onboard are under the fo'c'sle, and I make a mad dash through the rain and almost get the door slammed on my fingers. No surprise that breakfast will not be served today. Carlos sees my worried look and smiles.

"Welcome to hell, Roberto," he says. Every fifth wave is a monster and rolls the ship enough to almost dip the yardarm.

According to his journal, Columbus never experienced weather this rough on the *Santa María*. But on the return voyage with most of the sailors crammed aboard the *Niña*, there was a storm so fierce that most of them were on their knees praying and "made a vow that, on arriving at the first land they would all go in procession, in their shirts, to say their prayers in a church dedicated to Our Lady."

On the bridge, despite the tempest there is equanimity. Everyone knows their job and attends to it, confident that Miguel will guide us in safely. What a great team. A look around and I see that we are within a few miles of the inlet and that we are not alone out here; several container ships are waiting for improving conditions to run the inlet.

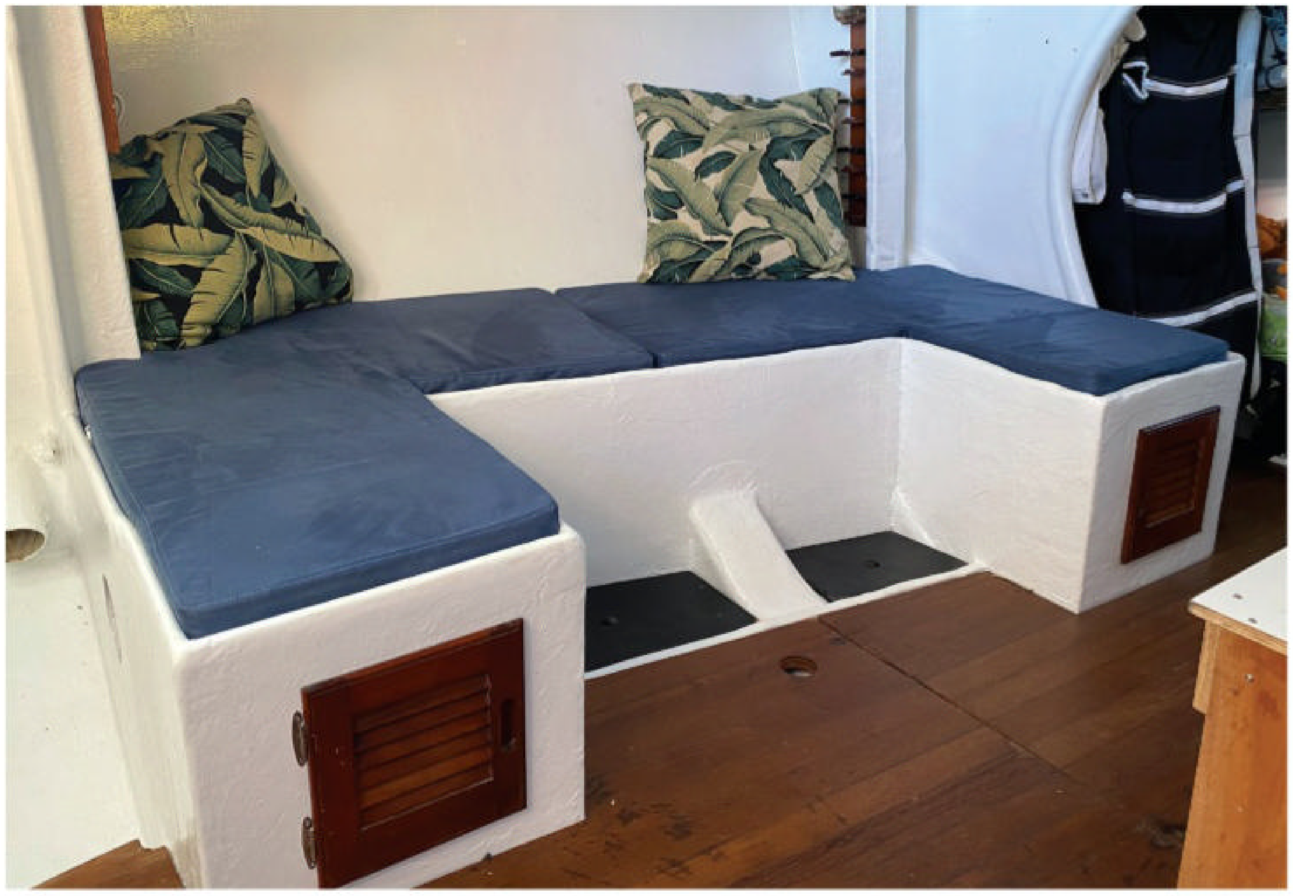
At 0830, black clouds and jagged lightning approach from the west, and a palouser shears the foam off the wave tops. Stinging, horizontal rain turns the world white. We roll hard and I slide across the deck, narrowly missing a good knock on the head from the binnacle. Damn you, I think, get up and grab hold of something!

Many times these past four days I've felt like little more than the ship's mascot, the landlubber journalist that Fundación Nao Victoria permitted to tag along. But I finally get a chance to earn my keep; Miguel is so focused on controlling the ship that he discreetly asks me to be the radioman for the entry.

"Roger that," I say, excited to be of some use. I take a seat in the bridge cabin where Columbus kept his log and called out course changes. I put out a securité alert announcing that we are coming in, then contact the 17th Street bridge tender to request an opening. We enter the inlet, and for the first time in days the yawing stops.

Talk about making an entrance. I've approached countless fuel docks in my life, but this is the first time that everyone in the area stops what they're doing and stares. Out come the cell phones, pointed in our direction.

Our hero of the day, Ángel, is at the dock to take our lines. With dogged determination he has come through with temporary dockage after pleading with every marina in town. At a little after noon, the diesels are shut down, and the crew heads below to find dry clothing. The North American tour of the *Santa María* is finished. Tomorrow they will move to a yard where the carrack will be prepped for shipment across the sea to Mallorca for some overdue maintenance until she sails again next year, bound for the Great Lakes.



The newly opened up main saloon seating area is more comfortable and spacious (left). Below (L to R), lifting the new aft cabin berth allows access aft; when lowered, it's a comfy double; the before version wasn't too appealing.

From Ballast to Berths

Converting unused water ballast tanks to living space was an ex-racer gamechanger.

BY JOANNA HUTCHINSON

Our Open 66, *NV,* was originally designed, built, and raced by Hungarian sailor Nándor Fa in the singlehanded around-the-world races Around Alone and the Vendée Globe. Like many such boats, she carried water ballast, up to 4 tons in six tanks (three on each side): one pair amidships, one pair at the stern, and the third pair between these two. Electric pumps filled the tanks, and through-hulls were angled to help the water enter and exit using the boat's movement and speed. Throughout the bilge, a complex system of pulleys and ropes opened and closed the valves for the different tanks.

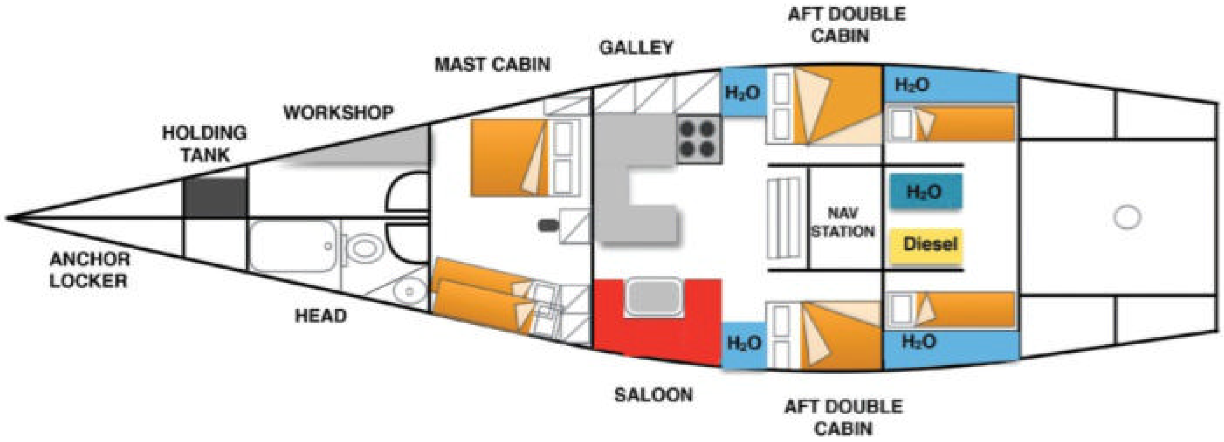
When we bought the boat, the water ballast had already been decommissioned, and the tanks were just inaccessible empty spaces. The designer confirmed that the water ballast wasn't structural or necessary for the normal use of the boat and the cruising we had planned for her, especially with our 4-ton, 4.2-meter (nearly 14-foot)-deep keel. This information, which opened up the possibility of converting those areas to additional livable space, was part of what convinced us that we could turn her from a pure racer into a performance family cruiser.

As with most race boats, *NV*'s interior was pretty minimal—the only door was to the head. High on our wish list was creating cabins so that we and any guests, crew, family, or friends could enjoy some privacy. With that in mind, we planned to convert the middle ballast tanks to two double cabins on each side of the boat, just aft of the main saloon; remodel the portside forward tank to help open up the main saloon; and recommission the aftmost tanks to expand our freshwater tankage.

Although not as structural as bulkheads, the ballast tank walls still provided some rigidity to the deck and hull, so we had to give careful thought before removing them. In the end, we were able to access and use the space by cutting and removing the longitudinal wall that separated the tanks from the boat's interior.

We left the perpendicular walls of the tanks in place as extra structure for the boat. Also, when removing this inner wall, we were careful to leave a few inches of it on all sides around the edges to act as stringers, providing additional support. Finally, we extended the bulkheads—which originally ended at the interior ballast tank walls—along the floor and roof of the area inside what had been the tanks so that they joined with the hull.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOANNA HUTCHINSON



Clockwise from left: Joanna and Timo geared up for grinding glass; the interior layout; the main saloon seating area before modification; the unused portside main saloon water tank during the makeover; repurposed water ballast tank space behind the galley holds shelves for a variety of items.

Using uni- and bi-directional fiberglass strips, we tabbed in the extensions parallel with and 45 degrees to the bulkheads, which would help prevent the bulkhead from twisting. This whole conversion took about a month to complete.

Repurposing the middle tankage area created two nice, cozy cabins on either side of the boat. With the ballast tank wall cut out, there was just enough width for a double bed, with some area around the side for storage. Using the boat's original aluminum pipe berths as the starting point, we extended this frame to a double, then attached a system of pulleys so the bed could either be lifted slightly to accommodate the boat's heel and keep the sleeper safe, or come all the way up to allow access to the navigation station and the stern of the boat when the beds weren't in use.

Opening up the port ballast amidships enlarged our saloon area and let us transform what had been basically a straight-backed bench to a more comfortable C-shape. And with the new configuration, we can fit more people around a table. Opposite, the tank to starboard was behind the galley, an awkward place to reach for any major modifying. But we still improved our use of the space by cutting in access hatches and installing shelves, where we can store some food and other items we don't need all the time.

Last but not least, we knew we wanted to preserve some of the boat's water ballast capability for better sailing performance, and we also knew we needed to extend our existing freshwater capacity. We decided to do both by recommissioning the aftmost set of tanks to carry fresh water. These tanks made the most sense for this because the deck is so low in this part of the boat, it's hard to use it for anything else like living accommodations. (My Italian partner, Timo, even suggested recommissioning one set of tanks with extra virgin olive oil, but since it weighs less than water, this option was overruled!)

Since this aftmost water ballast is mainly used for downwind sailing, we also decided to preserve a bit of the middle tanks—which we'd used for the new cabins—to carry water ballast as well, to help in upwind conditions. So, as we converted the unused tankage in the new double cabins, we walled off about a third of each of them to continue to carry water.

Commissioning these two sets of tanks for fresh water, we now have 1,500 liters (nearly 400 gallons) of drinking water that doubles as water ballast. We use gravity to move it from side to side; before each tack, we open the valve and let the water flow from the windward to the leeward tank, which becomes the windward, ballasted, tank after the tack. We also created a separate 100-liter (26-gallon) day tank for fresh water, keeping the ballast drinking water in reserve. To check the water level of each tank, we're using the original system, which consisted of a transparent hose on the outside of the tank with a colored floating ball indicating water level.

We're very happy with the extra space we have onboard, which has already allowed us to have friends, family, and crew stay with us in more comfort. However, we are also happy to have kept some of the tanks to continue using some water ballast, as the boat feels a bit light without them, and having these will allow us to push the boat to go faster with more control. 𝔄

Costa d'Oro
L'EXTRA

PHOTOS AND ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF JOANNA HUTCHINSON

BUZZARDS BAY
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Timing is Everything

Navigating the East Coast's man-made canals and skinny passages means timing your tides.

BY DAVID POPKEN

Cruising the Maine coast in our own boat has been a long-held dream for me and my wife, Kris. Last summer we made it reality on a four-month cruise aboard *Orion*, our 1987 Sabre 38, from southwest Florida to Maine and back to Virginia. After traveling the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW), which provides many sailors protected—if sometimes tedious—inland passage between Florida and Portsmouth, Virginia, we found ourselves navigating the rivers, cuts, and man-made canals between the northern Chesapeake Bay and Maine.

Along the way, we learned that navigating and timing the currents and tides in these often tight waterways can be as challenging and satisfying as any offshore passage (of which we had a few, as well). From north to south, the most noteworthy of these include the Cape Cod Canal connecting Cape Cod and Buzzards bays; the passage at Woods Hole, Massachusetts, linking Buzzards Bay and Vineyard Sound; The Race at Long Island Sound's eastern end; Hell Gate in Manhattan's East River; the Cape May Canal that permits direct passage between the Atlantic Ocean and Delaware Bay, and finally, the Chesapeake and Delaware (C&D) Canal, which connects Delaware Bay to the top of Chesapeake Bay and points south.

In general, as we sailed north on the Eastern Seaboard, tides became greater in strength and height and consequently occupied a more prominent place in our navigational and route planning. When tidal flow was concentrated in a canal or cut, the resulting currents could become heavy and quick, even dangerous for a displacement sailboat like ours. In almost every case and somewhat dependent upon the canal's length, we had to time our transits at either slack tide or during a favorable one. Weather, of course, was a factor, as was fog, not to mention the ships and tugs that use many of these waterways as well.

There are plenty of online sources for tides and currents, but our Bible became the *Eldridge Tide and Pilot Book*, commonly known as *Eldridge* and currently published by Jenny White Kuliesis, Peter Kuliesis, and Robert Eldridge White Jr. In continuous publication since 1875, *Eldridge* provides not only a concise set of tide and current tables for the Eastern Seaboard but also maps and diagrams of currents (these visuals are invaluable), safe navigation data, weather tools, sun and moon tables, some local lore, and much more. This is a book that is as comforting at the helm as it is in a berth before turning out the light. Studying *Eldridge* every day and absorbing its information became second only to the weather forecast in our decision-making about everything from a daysail to a coastal passage.

After a wonderful summer spent in Maine, it was time to head south to find a warmer winter base. Our friend, George Kyame, agreed to join me in Maine in late August as crew. Kris was home with an ailing cat, and I was happy to have company and physical support after several solo passages.

PHOTO BY WENDY MITMAN CLARKE

Cape Cod Canal

Heading south from Portland, we encountered our first canal when we arrived near the eastern entrance to the Cape Cod Canal in early September. The current iteration of the canal was completed in 1940, and at 480 feet wide it was, at that time, the widest sea-level canal in the world. As early as 1628, Myles Standish of the Plymouth Colony first considered a canal in the area to facilitate trade. In the 18th and 19th centuries, several private companies tried and failed to complete a canal, but in 1916, a privately funded canal was finally completed. It was only 100 feet wide and 25 feet deep, and from the beginning problems plagued it. The U.S. government stepped in and bought the canal in 1928 and designated it a free public waterway, eventually widening and deepening it to its current controlling depth of 32 feet.

Boats have a maximum of two-and-a-half hours to transit, and the Canal Authority monitors all travel with cameras. Technically the canal jurisdiction is nearly 17 nautical miles long, but the land cut is just 6, and that's where transit times are most meaningful. Two-and-a-half hours to travel something like 6 miles may seem like a piece of cake, but if you time the tide incorrectly, you could be pushing against 6 knots of current. Displacement sailboats are required to use auxiliary power, although sails can assist, and with 6 knots as a typical cruising speed in slack water, attempting a transit against the current would clearly be foolhardy.

Orion and crew neared the eastern canal entrance at 6:30 p.m. It was temperate and crystal clear, just at twilight. Shoreside lights were starting their evening twinkle. We were purposefully early, and with little wind we decided to douse the sails and drift while we enjoyed dinner. By 8:30, with just a minimal bit of flood left, we headed for the entrance.

A shocking number of lobster pots clustered near the canal's entrance, but we had the spotlight out, and it was invaluable. Once past the pots and inside the breakwater, our boatspeed increased quickly. I called Canal Control on VHF channel 13 to see what kind of traffic we might expect; just one commercial vessel, a tug towing a barge, was exiting Buzzards Bay and would be approaching us.

Nighttime canal transits can be daunting. When entering from Cape Cod Bay, the breakwater channel points directly at a large power plant on the southern shore. The channel then arcs to starboard just before you lose your nerve. It's disconcerting to be steaming directly at what appear to be hundreds of lights and certain disaster, but trust your GPS and the channel markers, and you'll soon safely pass into the canal.

Beyond that, our transit was lovely and uneventful. Other than some activity on the shoreside trails, we were alone on the waterway. The eastbound tow appeared, and *Orion* passed without fanfare.

Just past the Massachusetts Maritime Academy campus and at the end of the narrow portion of the canal, we hung a hard right into the narrow, twisty channel that leads to the popular anchorage and interesting town of Onset, Massachusetts. Well charted with daymarks and an occasional lighted buoy (again, the spotlight was invaluable), the channel led us into the anchorage where we found a suitable spot, dropped the hook, and tucked in for the night by 12:30 a.m. It had been a long and unusual day, and we both were dog tired but very happy with the results.

In the days that followed, we transited the exciting channels at Woods Hole from Buzzards Bay into Vineyard Sound during a late-afternoon tide window in lingering fog and light rain, then The Race while entering the eastern end of Long Island Sound. From there we made our way steadily toward New York City, where we navigated the notorious Hell Gate in settled weather and daylight. The ensuing ride down the East River was thrilling for its cinematic quality and the sheer number

HÖEGH AUTOLINERS
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A sailboat passes through the Cape Cod Canal (opposite page). The current in Woods Hole pulls past a nun buoy marking the channel (top). Close encounters with ships are common in the C&D Canal (bottom).

PHOTOS BY WENDY MITMAN CLARKE

of vessels on the waterway. In every case, *Eldridge* was our trusted guide. From New York, it was south down the New Jersey coast until we reached Cape May Inlet, where we pulled in and anchored in the harbor to prepare for transiting the Cape May and then C&D canals.

Cape May and C&D Canals

The Cape May Canal is short and perfunctory, but it saves hours and the need to negotiate the broad, often boisterous mouth of Delaware Bay. Currents aren't so much an issue here as the two fixed bridges with a 55-foot published clearance. With *Orion*'s mast height somewhere between 53 and 54 feet, we timed our transit at mean low water to take full advantage of maximum clearances. (It was our experience that the published height was greater than the actual height if one believes the tide gauges at the base of the bridges. We saw 54 feet on the tide gauge at mean low water.)

We left the anchorage near the Cape May Coast Guard station around 9:30 a.m., crossed the harbor, and transited the Cape May Canal an hour or so past the ebb. We continued up choppy Delaware Bay motorsailing in squally, unsettled weather, reaching the eastern entrance of the C&D near 7 p.m., which put us about a half-hour past slack water. Our timing was nearly perfect to take advantage of the west-flowing ebb.

At 14 miles long, the C&D has good anchorages at both ends, so properly timing your passage is straightforward, but the current can run as much as 2-4 knots in this canal. Motoring is required, and big ship traffic is nearly constant.

After a full day in rough-and-tumble Delaware Bay, the canal's calm waters were soothing to the soul. At 450 feet wide and 35 feet deep, the C&D is lit on both sides with lights every 500 feet atop 25-foot-high poles, making it easy for us to see our way. Five high-level highway bridges cross with a minimum height of 133 feet. One railroad lift bridge, while typically raised, still operates for trains; it's worth it to call Canal Control on VHF13 and check the bridge's status (more than one sailor has misjudged this and hit the bridge when it was down or not fully raised).

About 12 miles west of the canal's Delaware River entrance we came to Chesapeake City, whose small basin and snug anchorage was a welcome sight after a long and challenging day.

The following morning was a rather cool, cloudy, and dull event. *Orion* and crew left Chesapeake City heading west into the Chesapeake Bay. We counted more than two dozen bald eagles, mostly juveniles, before leaving the canal proper, a stunning testament to the birds' rebound from near extinction.

From there, we would enjoy several days of great sailing, fine anchorages, and a few marinas on our way south to what would be *Orion*'s winter home off the Back River in Hampton, Virginia. We began our summer cruise near Marco Island, Florida, at the end of May, and now, nearing the end of September, our long odyssey was nearly complete.

A foggy morning on Cape Cod Canal (above). A steam engine at the C&D Canal Museum (top left).

PHOTOS (L) BY WENDY MITMAN CLARKE, (R) BY ROBERT BERINGER

DEEP HISTORY

As you transit the Chesapeake and Delaware (C&D) Canal, at Chesapeake City you may notice three stone buildings perched on the south side, next to the Canal Control building. Operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the C&D Canal Museum is one of the region's most fascinating, and in some ways it's the only one of its kind in the country.

Though it's a sea-level canal today, when it opened in 1829 the C&D had four locks. These three buildings—built in 1837, 1851, and 1853—operated as a pump house to move water into the locks at Chesapeake City. Now on the National Register of Historic Places, they house two massive, walking beam Merrick & Sons steam engines powering a 38-foot-diameter cypress water wheel that lifted water from Back Creek into the canal—84.3 tons of water per minute. All remain intact, and the engines are the oldest steam engines still on their original foundations in the United States.

"It was one of the first civil engineering projects proposed in the New World, and one of the most difficult to carry out," according to the American Society of Civil Engineers, which has placed the canal on its list of national historic landmarks. The American Society of Mechanical Engineers has also listed the engines and water wheel as national landmarks.

This living history is accompanied by displays and artifacts about the canal's history, from its conception in 1661 by Augustine Herman, to its present status as the only 19th-century canal that remains a major shipping route, with more than 15,000 vessels using it annually.

Easily accessible on foot from either the anchorage or the marinas in South Chesapeake City, the museum is free. Hours are generally limited to weekends during summer, but you can call 410-855-5622 for updated information.

The Corps also operates the Cape Cod Canal Visitors Center and Museum near the Cape Cod Canal's eastern entrance. Rather less easily accessible to transiting sailors than the C&D Canal Museum, it still provides a wealth of information about the canal's history. It's open from May through October; confirm days and hours at 508-833-9678.

CHARTER NEWS

with **Zuzana Prochazka**

Mission to Mars

A group of friends takes charter pre-planning to a new level.

In the wake of the pandemic, many sailors are seeking adventure and grabbing onto a vision of their best lives. For some, that may mean sailing across the Atlantic with the ARC (Atlantic Rally for Cruisers) while for others, it could be a yacht charter in the Caribbean.

The latter was the case with some old sailing friends of mine, Kevin and Cathy Sebrowski, who had chartered a Lagoon 50 from TMM with a group of friends and reached out to me with questions.

As engineers and educators, they approached the charter like they were planning a mission to Mars, and it reminded me of my first trip to the BVI. Back then, our group practiced man overboard maneuvers and pored over paper charts. The current group took it up a notch with Zoom calls, Excel spreadsheets, and a PowerPoint presentation that was so thoroughly researched, it kept me in awe for an hour. These guys were the antithesis of charterers who book a flight, show up on the dock with buckets of duty-free booze, point the bow in an approximate direction, and hope for the best. This group wasn't messing around.

"What do you expect from a bunch of engineers?" asked Kevin.

Like many charterers, the group measured the distances (which in the BVI are short) and then packed the days with activities, somewhat taking into account island time and the effects of rum punch on group motivation. Tony, their captain, created the presentation to start but then asked each couple to research an island, which is a smart way to get people involved and excited. In the end, they had nine people aboard; that's a lot of cats to herd, so it's best that the cats have bought into a shared vision.

"The most useful aspect to us in the planning was knowing what each island had to offer," said Cathy. "In the preliminary planning, people announced their must-do items. Those interested in diving were able to secure dive boat pickups at pre-planned stops and times, so we didn't waste precious vacation time."

A solid itinerary served them well. "Even when hiccups occurred, we knew where we'd be heading and were able to stay the course," Cathy said. They had some technical issues with the boat, and knowing where they'd be each day allowed the charter base to find them and fix the problem. They also used the mooring reservation system app they had downloaded in advance, and when they found a squatter on their pre-paid ball, they resolved the issue with the help of the harbor master, so they had a secure place to stay for the night.

What would they have done differently? A little boat etiquette discussion may have helped.

"We should have talked about the use of water/showering, picking up after oneself, storing materials in your cabin rather than on the navigation table or seats, and using a towel to sit on once coming aboard after a swim."

It's true that issues such as where to go snorkeling initially seem bigger than conserving water or keeping a clean boat, but in the end, you're camping with people in close quarters for a week, so no detail is too small.

What was the best part? "When you travel with great friends, those connections and shared good times are surely the best part of the trip," Cathy and Kevin said. "However, the Baths, lobster on Anegada, the Bitter End Yacht Club, Conch Island, and anchoring in a quiet harbor were all highlights."

You don't have to learn PowerPoint or Excel to prepare for a charter vacation, and you don't need to approach it like you're going to space. But to protect your investment, you should do some planning around the specific cruising grounds, things to see and do, provisioning, and an approximate itinerary. As in the rest of life, communication and expectation management are key on vacation, so a Zoom call or two won't go amiss. 𝔄

Thanks to their detailed planning, the friends enjoy a laid-back morning at the Baths on Virgin Gorda in the BVI.

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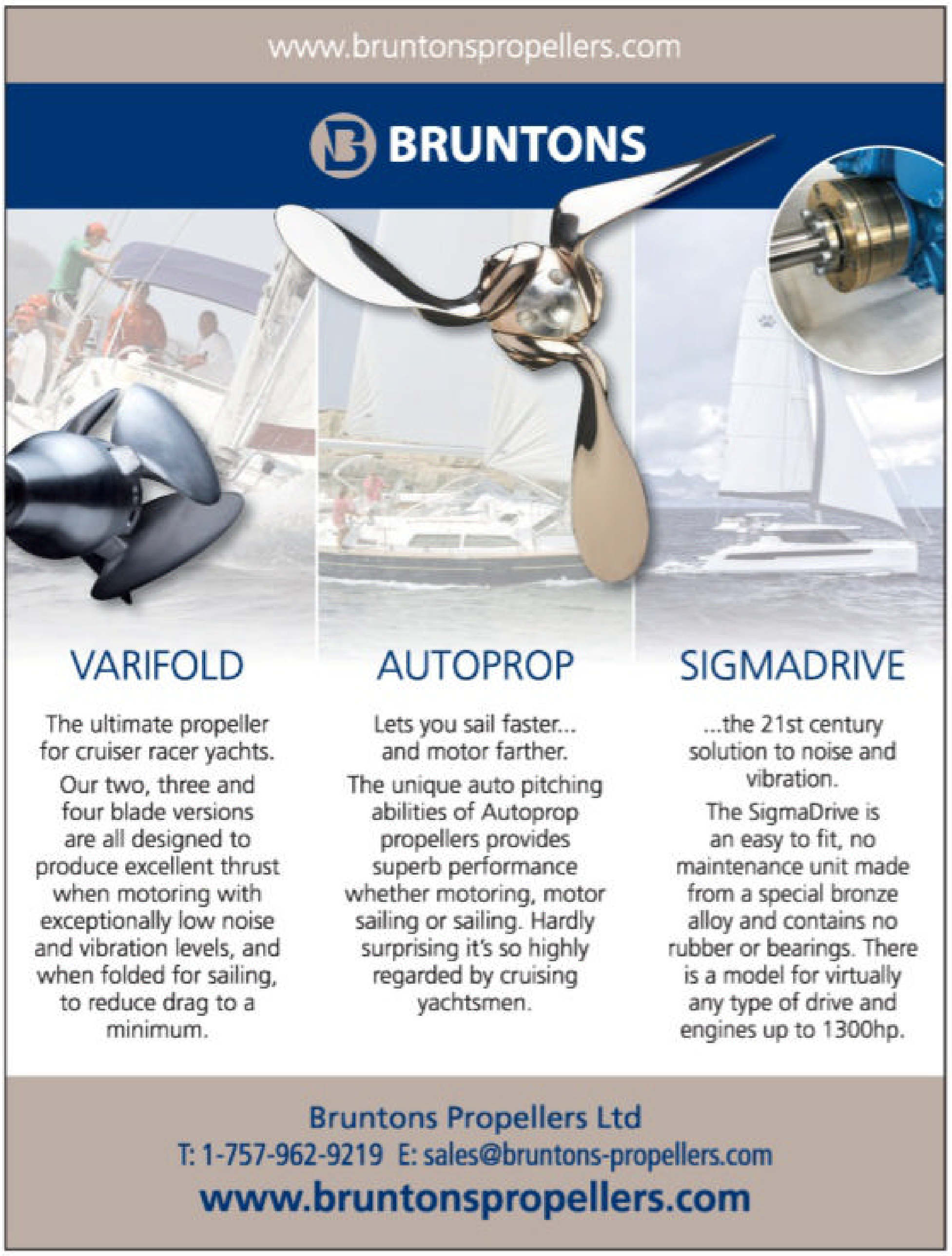
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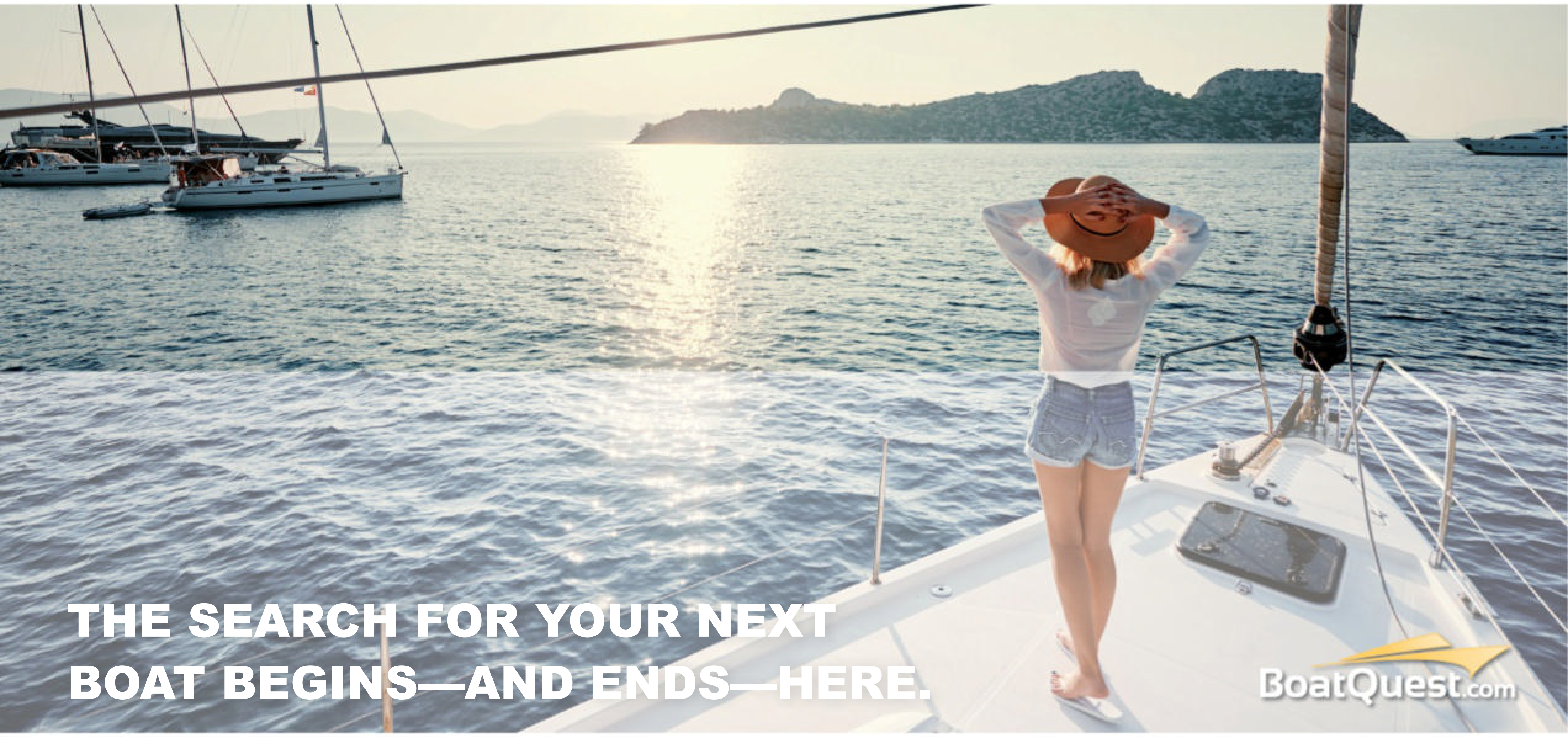

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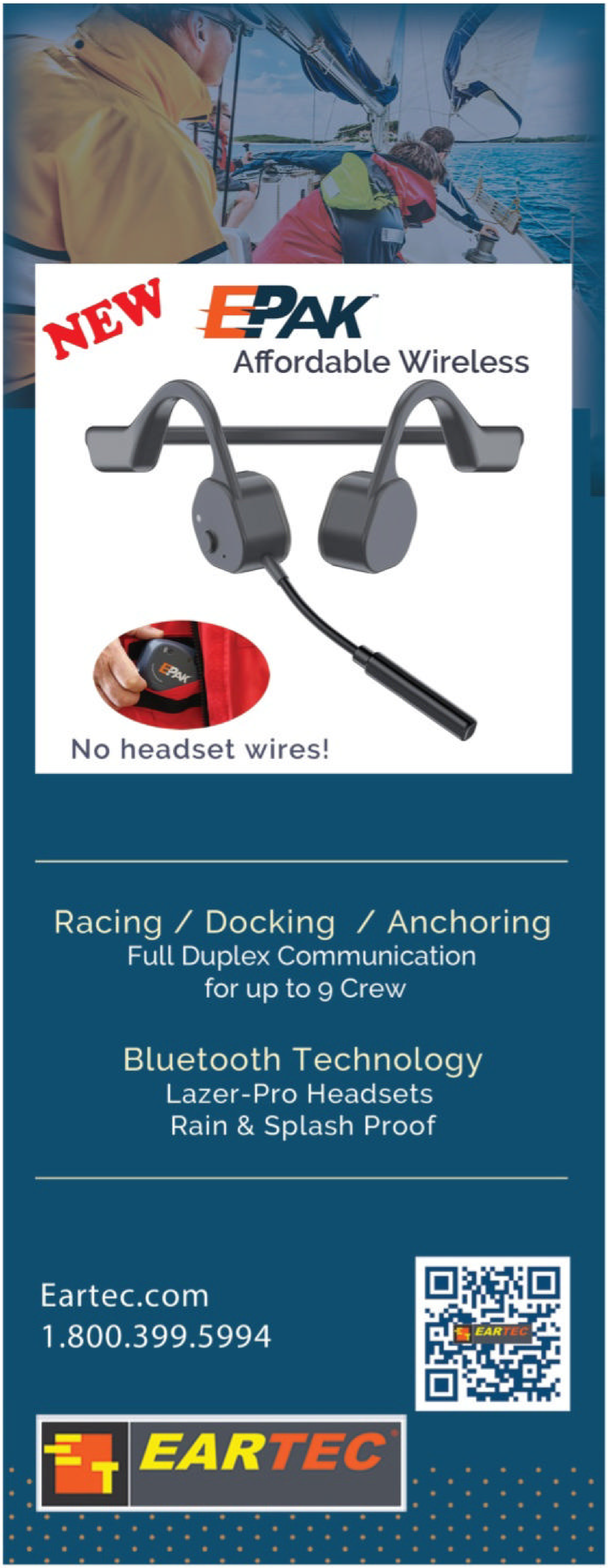
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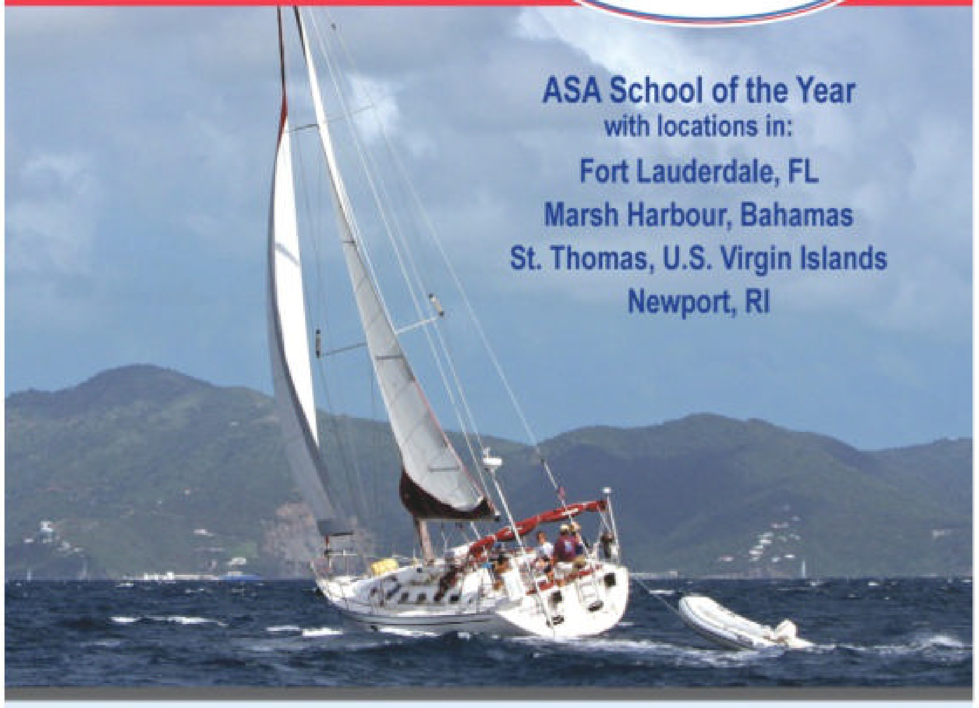

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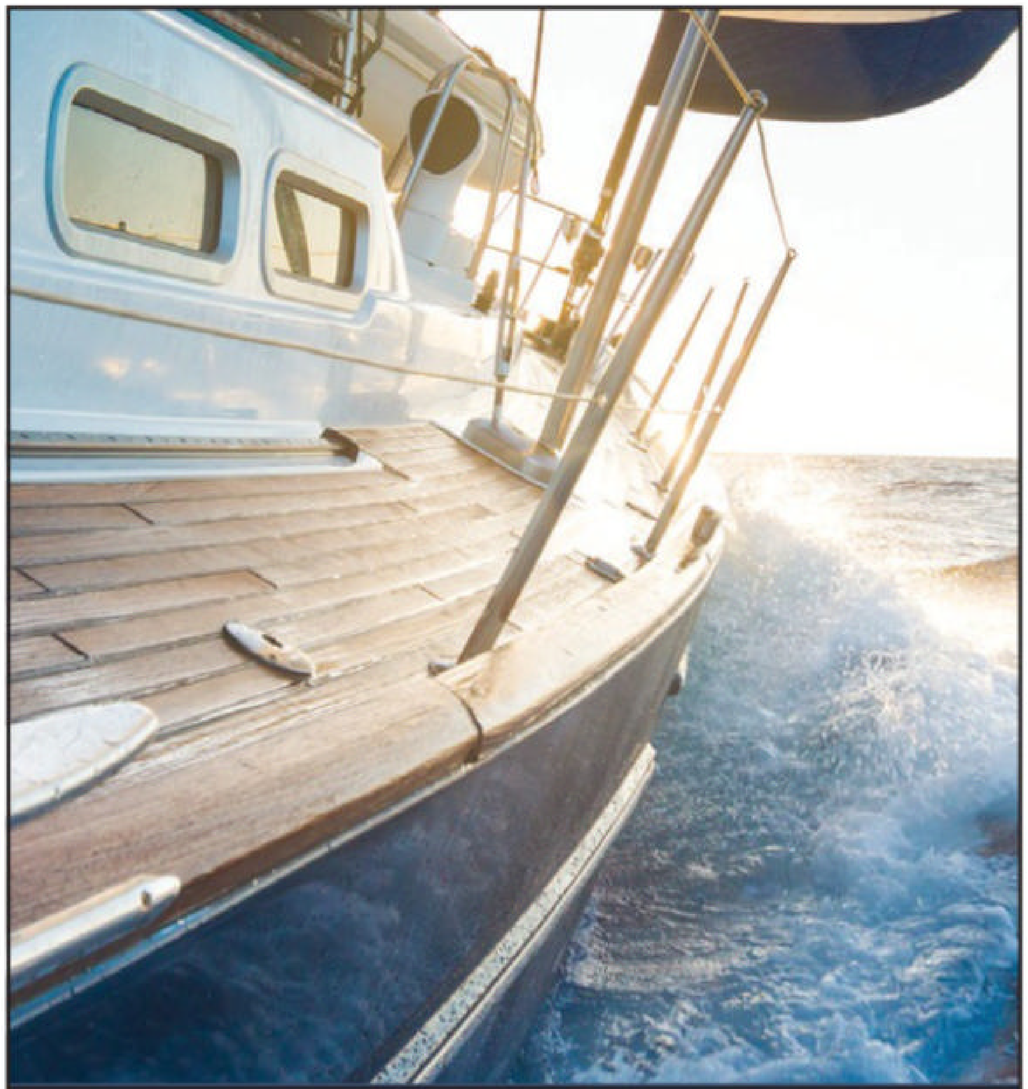

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2019 Fountaine Pajot Lucia 40	$510,000
38’ 2020 Jeanneau 389 -	$279,000
38’ 2023 Excess 11	Call for Price
38’ 2018 Maine Cat 38	**SOLD**
38’ 2018 Beneteau Oceanis 38.1	$274,000
36’ 1985 Cape George 36 Pilothouse	**SOLD**
34’ 2019 Grand Soliel 34	Reduced to $199,800
32’ 2013 Seaward 32RK	$145,000
31’ 2019 Cape 31	$240,000
31’ 2008 Beneteau Oceanis 31	**SALE PENDING**
2022 Jeanneau Sunfast 3300 - with sails and electronics	$344,000
2022 Jeanneau Sunfast 3300	$299,000
27’ 1986 Island Packet 27	$32,500

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Sun Odyssey 380 - New for 2023, ready for spring delivery, 2 cabin, 1 head

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45’ 2019 X-Yachts Xc 45 (CA)	**$775,000**	26’ 1977 Marshall 26	$110,000
44’ 2017 Leonardo Yachts/ Eagle 44	$415,000	26’ 2012 Tofinou 8m	$99,000
44’ 2012 X-Yachts Xp 44	**$525,000**	23’ 2022 Tofinou 7m	$119,000

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CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

by Charles J. Doane

A *Star* to Steer By

After a lifetime together, Steve and Irene Macek are still happy to be afloat.

I first met Steve and Irene Macek in the proper way—in an anchorage full of bluewater cruising boats. This was in St. Georges, Bermuda, in the spring of 2019. Theirs, without doubt, was the most distinctive boat there—an immaculate, three-masted, double-ended Marco Polo schooner named *Star*, with tanbark sails, a yin-yang emblem on her bow, and the flag of St. Kitts and Nevis flying from her transom. She was pretty hard to miss.

The Maceks and I immediately bonded, as cruisers will, as though we were long-lost family. Steve, who had once built a jury rudder for *Star* out of some scrap steel flooring and a cast-off prop shaft, held my hand through a minor crisis I was having with my rudder. He was also very interested in my boat, an aluminum Boreal 47, and at once proclaimed me his "aluminum boat guru."

Steve and Irene Macek stand next to their new boat, Pearl, *after more than 30 well-traveled years aboard* Star.

PHOTO BY CHARLES J. DOANE

Star had served the Maceks well. They'd purchased her 30 years earlier, when Irene, a British national, was pregnant with their daughter, Pearl. They also built a house on Nevis, where they eventually became citizens. They always spent winters there and sailed north each spring to spend summers on Cape Cod, managing a small fleet of boats for a private owner.

The Marco Polo, designed by L. Francis Herreshoff in 1946, is a pencil-thin craft—55 feet long and 10 feet wide. The interior feels cramped, but they are amazing load carriers. *Star* has a 600-gallon fuel tank and proved an able craft when the Maceks took off on a two-year west-about circumnavigation in 2002, when Pearl was 12 years old.

Steve bragged to me they only bought fuel once the whole time. "We topped off in Africa," he declared. "But only because it was wicked cheap. We still had 100 gallons and probably could have made it."

He and Irene returned to their Cape Cod/Nevis routine after closing the circle, but they told me in Bermuda they wanted to get a new boat and go back to full-time cruising. Steve wanted something just as strong but easier to maintain than *Star* and thought aluminum was the way to go.

We stayed in touch after that, exchanging brokerage listings for boats they might be interested in. We crossed wakes again in Beaufort, North Carolina, in May 2020, and Steve was fretting about the pandemic making it hard to check out boats. The following March they sailed all the way down to Curaçao to inspect an Alubat Ovni listed there, but it was in terrible shape. Heading north to Cape Cod again, they were disconsolate, but then caught word of a 2002 Alliage 44, in very good shape, for sale in the south of France.

"When they ended the lockdown in France, we were on the first plane out of Boston to Paris," Irene told me. Three days later they closed the deal.

By the time I went to visit the Maceks on their new boat late this past summer, they'd sold *Star* to a young couple. They'd also sold the house on Nevis and seemed all set to take off again around the world.

"It's all been pretty hard on Pearl," noted Irene. "She was raised on that boat and in that house. She thinks we sold her childhood!"

But by then Pearl, now a full-grown woman running a media business in Rhode Island, had also had a baby, a boy named Kai. He was born in December 2021, just three days after Steve and a buddy arrived in Nevis, having sailed the Alliage—formerly named *Levita*, now named *Pearl*—nonstop across the Atlantic from Gibraltar.

"She's a big French surfboard!" exclaimed Steve. "We were flying downwind the whole way. Sometimes we were making 15 knots!"

Steve and Irene are definitely enjoying their new boat. She's 11 feet shorter than *Star*, but 5 feet wider and feels more spacious. And she's packed with amenities: a watermaker, a generator, and (Irene's favorite) a washing machine. But now that they're grandparents, they're rethinking their plan to take off again around the world.

It's been a long, wonderful ride for both of them.

"Irene and I got married 42 years ago so she could get her green card," Steve told me. "I never thought she'd hang out with me for any length of time."

"Me neither," cracked Irene with a smile.

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